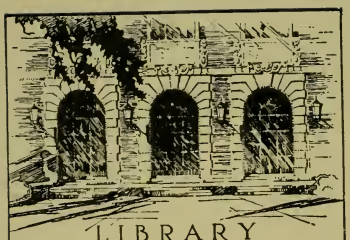

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MARQUIS AND MERCHANT.

VOL. I.

MARQUIS AND MERCHANT.

BY

MORTIMER COLLINS.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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TO

THE HONOURABLE

GRANTLEY FITZ-HARDINGE BERKELEY,

WHO,

BOTH IN LIFE AND LITERATURE,

SHOWS THE TRUE MEANING OF THE ADAGE—

"WHOM THE GODS LOVE, DIE YOUNG."

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MARQUIS AND MERCHANT.

CHAPTER I.

THE MARQUIS.

BREAKFAST at Ashridge Manor. Four persons were present in the spacious breakfast-room, which overlooked Ashridge Park and the river Ashe below. The old Elizabethan house, built as an hypæthral quadrangle with cloisters, all of red brick, save the white marble mullions of the windows, stands on a hill looking southward. Two rivers ran through the park, neither of them streams of the first force, though very charming as ornamenting an aristocratic de-

mesne. The Ashe is the wider: you can get a punt or a boat upon it, and enjoy a little fishing or flirtation. The Petteril might be considered a mere brook: but it comes leaping from the hills above Ashridge with such untireable vivacity that its volume is forgotten in its vigour. And the two streams (neither quite a Mississippi, or even a Thames) combine to form a delightful lakelet in the park of Ashridge Manor, the heritage from time immemorial of the great family of Waynflete.

It was the fourteenth of February—a day consecrated to a somewhat mischievous saint. The post had just arrived at Ashridge, and at least one person of the four at table was full of delight. She looked at the unaccustomed pile of letters by her plate—one or two of them quite vast packages to come by post, while others were tiny dainty missives—with exquisite antici-

pations of pleasure. She forgot her breakfast in the thought. She was a charming child of eight, this recipient of roguish correspondence, with plenteous fair hair and wondrous blue eyes, and the patrician arch of the upper lip, and the aristocratic slenderness of foot and of hand. She was Lady Mary Waynflete, daughter of the Marquis of Wraysbury, by his second Marchioness, *née* Vallance de Vere. And the first letter she opened began:

"Sweet Lady Mary, Empress and fairy!"

with much more of the same sort. The Marquis had a poet among his friends; and, though he lived in the nineteenth century, had sufficient goodness of heart to play the part of Maecenas. I don't think he lost thereby. His poet cost him considerably less than his friend Lord Cheviot paid the trainer of his horses, and gave him consider-

ably more pleasure. And possibly the world in general derived some benefit from this eccentricity of his.

I have begun with the youngest member of the party—this pretty piquant little Lady Mary. There was present also the Marquis, a handsome dark-bearded man in the prime of life, with a careless insouciant air in his dark languid eyes and indolent lips. Also was present his son by his first marriage, Adrian Lord Waynflete, like his father, but an inch or so taller, and inheriting all his father's indolent careless power. Both father and son gave you the idea of men who could do anything under strong impulse, but to whom continuous exertion would be a bore.

The Marchioness of Wraysbury has been left to the last, simply because she is the most difficult to describe. Indeed, she is indescribable. Her blue-eyed fair-haired

little daughter is her miniature presentment: and there are just twenty years between the twain. And there are almost twenty years between her and Lord Wraysbury; notwithstanding which, she married her Marquis for love. This indeed is quite credible to anyone who regards her husband in the very prime of his life, with an air of repose about him which gives the idea of a vast reserve of power.

Lord Waynflete, let me remark, was rather an exceptional young fellow. He had chosen the middle path. He was neither *viveur* nor pedant. Never had it occurred to him that it was necessary to have *brûle-gueule* perpetually singeing his moustache, and searing his throat—or to be always drinking, or to frequent casinoes, in order to enjoy life. Small blame to him herein. He was a man of tastes far too fastidious to tolerate the vile dissipations which other men found delici-

ous. It was no virtue with Waynflete: it was simply taste. He liked other things. At Eton and Christchurch he had done very well, but he went into no extremes. He was a good scholar; but his reading was rather desultory and eccentric, and he did not attempt to take honours. He was a splendid oarsman; but could not be persuaded to be one of the University eight. When he left Oxford his father had rather a fancy that he should become a cornet in the Guards; Adrian, expressing perfect willingness to make any such slight sacrifice to please the Marquis, at the same time argued that the Guards were rather for show than use, that he did not care for evening parties in London, that he should like to be down at Ashridge, looking after matters agricultural, arboricultural, ornithological.

Adrian, Lord Waynflete, was an oddity. There was never a man who more thorough-

ly enjoyed pleasant converse with a pretty girl; but he hated, with bitter hatred, the hot unpleasant unfragrant assemblages, wherein London compels one to practise flirtation. He loved all living creatures. He loved dogs and horses, trees and flowers. Love creates skill. He knew more of such things than you would conceive possible, in the case of a young gentleman just fresh from Oxford.

So he told his father that he would rather remain at Oxford than enter the Guards: and the Marquis, a man wise enough to know that everybody should be allowed to do what he likes, if it does not interfere with anybody else, surrendered his crotchet at once. Indeed, he was rather glad to get his son at home with him. He saw his own youth absolutely reflected in Adrian. The Marquis had only two faults: he was haughty and he was idle; and he flattered himself that,

in his son's case, these faults would become virtues. All philosophers are aware that virtue and vice are convertible terms.

"Upon my honour," said Lord Wraysbury, after reading the first letter he had opened, "one's lawyers and agents are the most stupid people in the world—and the most expensive. What do you think, Alice? You know how I wanted to buy that Lindesay estate. They have had orders about it for years past. And now I find the old man is dead—and somebody has bought it—a Mr. Mowbray."

"How very annoying!" said the Marchioness.

"I don't care so very much about it," said Lord Wraysbury, "though it has always cut an awkward cantle out of my property here. But those fellows, Woolmer and Wood, make a thousand a year out of me at least—and so I think they might attend to

their duties. And perhaps the man who has bought the place may be a nuisance."

"On the other hand," remarked Lord Waynflete, "he may be an acquisition, in which event we need not make ourselves uncomfortable in anticipation. At the same time, father," he went on to say, "I think we trust too much to agents and attorneys. This Mowbray looked after the matter for himself, depend upon it."

"But if you pay people to do your work, they ought to do it," said the Marquis.

"True; but they don't," replied his son. "Few things are well done unless you do them yourself. I find I have to look after my own horses and dogs, if they are to be properly looked after. It's just the same with your estates, and with the people on your estates——"

"Papa, papa! look at my valentines,"

interrupted Lady Mary. "Such a lot, and so pretty! Adrian, ain't they pretty? Did you send me one? Which was yours? Do tell me."

So an examination of the pretty little girl's valentines interrupted the conversation. They were dainty and delicate productions, of course: who would send anything ugly or stupid to a Marquis's daughter.

But, in the midst thereof, Lord Wraysbury could not help reverting to the annoyance he had suffered. It is confoundedly unpleasant, without question, to find your pet scheme frustrated by some blundering stranger, who comes upsetting your arrangements like a hornet through a spider's web.

"Who is this Mowbray, I wonder?" said the Marquis.

"A Manchester man, I fancy," replied his son. "I rather think Mowbray and Co. had a representative at Eton. They

do tread on one's kibes, those fellows."

"I wish it hadn't happened," said Lord Wraysbury. "I was quite willing to give a hundred and thirty thousand for the Lindesay estate—and I believe that is more than it's worth."

"The Manchester men have more money than we have," said his son; "or if they have not more, it is more easily comeatable. Besides which, they are more wideawake. They look after their own affairs."

"Yes," said Lord Wraysbury, "that is very true, and is, of course, the reason why they win so many battles from us. But I would rather be foiled now and then by my agent's stupidity or slowness than do my agent's work."

"Quite true, all that," said Lord Waynflete. "At the same time it may be doubted whether we don't leave too much to agents. This is a time of conflict, and I certainly

think we might do a world of good by acting more for ourselves. Agents and stewards and bailiffs have their own fortunes to make, and will certainly take care of that business first. And of course it is their interest to keep the landowner apart from his tenants and dependents—to make themselves indispensable to their employer, while they make him something terrible to his own people."

"You talk like a Radical, Adrian," said the Marquis, laughing. "But you talk very good sense, for all that. And I think the people in these parts know *you* pretty well, and don't make any mistake about your feeling towards them. At the same time I don't think we take as much trouble as we ought to keep up a good understanding with the lower classes."

"I don't know what you mean by that," interrupted the Marchioness. "I like your lower classes. I think I am on visiting

terms with everybody in the village."

"Ah! but it is such a small village, mamma," said Lord Waynflete. He always called his step-mother "mamma;" and indeed at the date of his father's marriage—when she was the undoubted belle of the season, and he was in the fifth form at Eton—there was a marvellous distance between them.

It was a difficult relation at first, of course; it gradually became an easy one, though not without its occasional awkwardnesses. There cannot be a doubt that anybody who marries twice is likely to produce queer complications. Few men, and far fewer women, can pardon the children of their antecessors for daring to exist. It would probably be a great blessing to society if women were not allowed to marry more than once: whereas a widower might be encouraged to marry a second time by the remission of

his income-tax, or by making him a colonel of volunteers.

In the present instance the awkwardness of the relation was destroyed by the humour and tact of those most concerned. The Marchioness of Wraysbury, a girl fresh from school, found herself the stepmother of a daring and dauntless young Etonian. She accepted the situation. She treated him as if she were his elder sister. They were good friends at once. Of course they saw little of each other, and with long intervals, for the Marquis was in love with his wife, and took her from place to place with infinite enjoyment, and left his son to work his way through the formal grooves of Eton and Oxford. But, when they met, the Marchioness, through all the young fellow's changes from year to year, from Eton to Oxford, from Oxford to the world, suited herself to his gradual development.

She became his friend, his crony. She sympathized with him when he came home during the University vocations: she flirted with him when he came home altogether, and accepted his manhood. Much did she resemble the lady of whom Steele said—"to love her is a liberal education." She completed Lord Waynflete's education—in a style beyond the reach of Eton and Oxford.

It need hardly be said that Lady Mary Waynflete contributed largely to the friendly relations which existed between the Marchioness and her stepson. A young fellow sees his father marry again. He remembers his own mother, and is prepared to recalcitrate. Who can blame him for revering his mother's memory?—for thinking that no other woman can fitly occupy her place? Without such noble prejudices the human race would very soon deteriorate. But a brief time passes—and a child is born.

"Unto us a child is born" is the key-note of Christianity: it is the key-note to humanity also. The moment the Marchioness had a baby-girl to show to her stepson, there was no danger of feud between them. The Marchioness herself was a mere girl. Adrian was a generous boy, full of boyhood's impracticable aspirations. But he had always loved dogs and flowers, and everything that was fresh and pleasant: how in the world could he help liking babies? He loved his little sister Amy with a love beyond description: and so there gradually faded from his brain that jealousy of Mary's mother which was prompted by a vague recollection of his own mother.

Very quietly, perhaps unconsciously, the Marchioness undertook this young Adrian's education. Let me be understood. Homer is a fine writer; Horace is useful for quotations; Euclid for calculations. But the best

education of a young man is neither Greek nor Latin nor geometry; it has nothing to do with the siege of windy Troy, nor with the

> Persicos ode, puer, apparatus,
> Bring me a chop and a couple of potatoes;

nor with that long-legged isosceles triangle that bumptiously bestrides the asses' bridge. It is what a woman gives him. Sometimes it is the mother—always would it be so if mothers were not so terribly like hens with broods of ducklings—so frightfully afraid of the young gentleman's taking to bad practices without giving anybody notice. Sometimes sisters—elder sisters, I mean—are of some service: but they are too often occupied with their own troubles, and with deciding whether they will be sisters of mercy or girls of the period. Cousins are better: one's cousins, strangely enough, seem seldom such fools as one's sisters.

But sweethearts without kinship are best of all. No man finishes his education until he falls in love.

Let us return to the breakfast-table.

"Yes," said the Marchioness, "it *is* a small village. But it is quite a model place —an English village on a diminutive scale. We've an inn, you know, Adrian—the 'Waynflete Arms'—with a landlord who weighs something tremendous . . . what is it?"

"Twenty-two stone one pound, mamma," said Lord Waynflete.

"Yes. And a blacksmith, who also fights, I think you told me, and an old maid who keeps a general shop, and the parish clerk and schoolmaster, Marshal—and who else? Why, I had almost forgotten Mr. Rosvere!"

"Forgotten the parson, mamma! How shocking! Well, Rosvere is a good fellow,

and not too clever, which I think is an immense recommendation. As to the other inhabitants of the model village—what shall I say? The big inn-keeper, Burton, is a very good fellow in his way; and I like to hear him talk, when he has energy enough to do it. Crawford the blacksmith is not a bad sort; he shoes a horse capitally, and knows how to use his fist."

"What a recommendation!" said the Marchioness.

"Perhaps," said Lord Waynflete, "you prefer Miss Avery's—she knows how to use her tongue. It is a far more effective weapon."

"She is very amusing," replied Lady Wraysbury. "When I feel rather dull—and one can't help feeling rather dull now and then——"

"In the country," said Adrian.

"Anywhere," she replied. "I am just

as dull in Park Lane. Dulness is in oneself, and not in surrounding circumstances. Well, when I am dull down here, Miss Avery is as good as a number of *Punch*—indeed, she is much better, for that journal is sometimes tedious."

"And Miss Avery is not?" he said.

"Oh! yes, she is—very tedious indeed sometimes. But it is not the same sort of tediousness. And she tells me all the scandal of the neighbourhood in a mild form; for hers is a regular scandal-shop, and you can't enter it without hearing some ridiculous story of somebody."

"I suspect," said Lord Wraysbury, who had just finished his *Globe*, "that there is a shop of the same sort in every village in England."

Quoth Adrian:

> "Where'er to God they raise a house of prayer,
> The devil always builds a chapel there."

"That," said the Marquis, "means public-houses. I don't quite see what the author of evil has to do with them, except that he prompts the mixture of villanous poison with wholesome beverage. But the gossip-shop, where people's characters are abominably used, is quite the diabolic chapel of the poet. I fear women can't be prevented from telling stories by Act of Parliament."

"I think not," said the Marchioness, with a gay laugh. "You will not so easily deprive us of our prerogative. We are the story-tellers. Your Acts of Parliament, you know, of which you talk so much, are not exactly omnipotent. They cannot destroy the eternal laws."

"Of gossip?" said the Marquis.

"Yes, of gossip," she said. "Gossip is older than your Acts of Parliament, and will last longer than any of them."

"And so, hurrah for Miss Avery!" said Lord Waynflete. "She's a delightful creature, to my mind. I have always loved her, since she sold me surreptitious gunpowder."

"But in enumerating our chief characters," said the Marchioness, "I positively omitted the Hermit. He is the oddest of them all, I think."

"Ah!" said the Marquis, who had been in a meditative mood while this conversation flowed on, "there is another reason why I regret that this Mowbray, whoever he is, has bought Lindesay. There is the common."

Now the catenation of thought in Lord Wraysbury's mind requires an explanatory word. The hermit whom he mentioned lived on the borders of Ashridge Common, in a quaint little dwelling called the Hut. This same common is a fine wide expanse, with groups of trees upon it, and short

smooth turf where the young people of the neighbourhood play cricket. Although called Ashridge Common, it is in the Manor of Lindesay—as indeed is part of Ashridge village or hamlet: and for a long series of years it had been much neglected, turf being cut by people without rights of turbary, and trees recklessly destroyed, and quarries formed by digging for sand and gravel. It had been one reason why Lord Wraysbury wished to buy Lindesay, that it would give him manorial rights over the common, and enable him to preserve it from further injury. A beautiful bit of wild land, with the River Ashe bounding it on one side, with some clear ponds in its midst, like sheets of silver in an expanse of emerald, with irregular various clumps of trees—oak, elm, ash and mountain ash, birch, fir, chestnut—grouped by happy accident, with yellow tracts of gorse and purple tracts of heather, it is the

most delightful place in the world for a stroll or a canter. The Marquis was disgusted at the state into which the neglect of the late lord of the manor had allowed it to fall: and his desire to buy Lindesay had been in a great measure due to his wish that Ashridge Common should be brought back to its proper condition. His son wholly sympathised with him.

"Yes," he said, "that is the worst of it. But perhaps Mr. Mowbray will do what we wished to do. Manchester men like to maintain their rights. I daresay he will make short work of the turf-cutters and gravel-diggers and gipsies."

"Oh! I hope he will let the gipsies stay," said the Marchioness. "They cannot do much harm, can they? And they are so picturesque."

"I don't think a Manchester man is likely

to tolerate gipsies," said Lord Waynflete. "The two races represent contrary ideas. Manchester settles down, and sells: Bohemia wanders, and steals."

"Well," said Lord Wraysbury, "we may as well dismiss the subject. Mowbray will appear on the scene, and then we shall see. If he is going to live at Lindesay, he'll have to build. Come, Mary, my darling, let me look at your valentines."

Little Lady Mary, the pet of Ashridge Manor, seldom found herself so long neglected. But she had been occupied with her valentines, and so had not interrupted the sage confabulations of her elders. Still she was very glad to welcome papa as a reader of her various valentines. It is only very little ladies who deign to receive valentines now. As I remember writing long ago, to *Somebody*, in the *Pall Mall Gazette:*

Such follies perchance were the fashion at
  Eleven, when your charms were at school:
But the love-passion now is not passionate,
  And the warmest adorer is cool.
And *you* have adorers in plenty,
  And very soft nothings they say,
But nobody says, "Sweet and twenty,
  I love you!" on Valentine's Day.

To wed's an affair of statistics,
  Of so many thousands a year,
And nobody plagues you with distichs,
  And nobody costs you a tear:
And the prospect around you is sunny,
  And your smile is delightfully gay,
Though poor Charley, who'd not enough money,
  Went to India last Valentine's Day.

Whoever should lovers gone by count
  Would be a ridiculous girl:
You, fair one, have landed your Viscount,
  And enchanted his father, the Earl.
'Tis your privilege, lady, to treat hearts
  In a haughty indifferent way—
Let milkmaids remember their sweethearts
  On the morning of Valentine's Day.

But Lady Mary Waynflete, being only eight years old, enjoyed her valentines—enjoyed showing them to her papa and mamma, and to her brother Adrian. Lady Mary will have other ideas at eighteen.

When this pleasant inspection of fantastic frivolities was over, guesses having been made at the authors or senders of each, the party dispersed. The Marquis went to his library, where he was wont to pass an hour or two daily on a translation of Catullus, which he hoped at some future time to finish and publish. The Marchioness, with her merry little girl, went to her own especial morning room, there to occupy herself with some feminine occupation till luncheon. Lord Waynflete, followed by an enormous Pyrenean wolf-hound, who was his constant companion, and on whom he had conferred the expressive if inelegant name of Big Dog, descended to the hall, lighted a cigar, and strolled out into the grounds.

It was a chilly morning, yet not entirely unpleasant. In the valleys there still rested a silvery mist, which had risen from the

river Ashe. The temperature was warm; the damp in the atmosphere just suggested a cigar; Lord Waynflete, as I have said, lighted one, and then walked round to the stables to look at the horses and dogs, and then farther a field to see the growth of some young trees of his own planting.

By-and-by he found his way to the village. Like his father, Lord Waynflete was haughty, but not to his dependents and inferiors. He was on perfectly easy terms with Burton, at the Waynflete Arms—with the loquacious unveracious old lady at the village shop—with Crawford, the stalwart disciple of Hephaistos. He met the vicar on perfectly equal terms; but he could not stand the schoolmaster, who was an ill-tempered plausible fellow.

Lord Waynflete entered the little shop. It smelt horribly of tallow candles and corduroy trowsers. The parson was there,

talking to Miss Avery. Rosvere, a Cambridge man, not too clever, not too eagerly pugnacious in the battles of the Church Militant, was rather a favourite with Adrian. There was one drawback only: you couldn't talk with Rosvere for more than ten minutes. By that time he had exhausted all his ideas, and longed to escape; but, being a shy man, he found closing a conversation even more difficult than opening it.

The subject of converse in this centre of Ashridge gossip, was the purchase of Lindesay, by Mr. Mowbray. Ill news travels apace. Miss Avery knew it, and told the parson, who had come in a great hurry to tell *her*. They were gravely discussing the matter when Lord Waynflete entered. They suddenly stopped, and he at once divined the reason.

"Good morning, Rosvere," he said. "You have heard the news, I see. My father's

agents have let Lindesay slip through their fingers. Very stupid of them: he had ordered them to offer a fancy price for it. Come up to luncheon presently, and try to console him."

"I am afraid I have hardly time to-day, my lord," said the Vicar.

"Nonsense," interposed Miss Avery, who was always delightfully impertinent; "you must do your duty to your principal parishioners, Mr. Rosvere. If he wants consolation in his troubles, you mustn't neglect him because he's a rich lord."

"Excellent doctrine!" said Lord Waynflete, laughing. "You must come, Rosvere, after that. Do you know that what annoys my father most is about Ashridge Common? He wanted to stop the depredations, and preserve it from being utterly spoilt. But I daresay Mr. Mowbray, who I hear is a Manchester man, will take the same view

of it. Do you know anything about him, Rosvere?"

"I don't know him personally, though I have heard much of him. He is enormously rich, very energetic and impulsive, an advanced Liberal, and a sound Churchman. He is a widower—with one daughter, about eight years old. His father left him at the head of a great firm, and he has doubled or trebled itsimportance. I have friends at Manchester, you know: and from what I have heard them say, John Mowbray's peculiar characteristic is an absolute determination to carry out any plan on which he has set his heart."

"A charming neighbour," said Lord Waynflete. "However, as his father made the money, I suppose he is a gentleman by education."

"Not a scholar," said the Vicar. "His father regarded Greek and Latin as abomin-

ations, and wouldn't let his son learn a word of them. But I hear that he is a man of ability, and has rather a considerable knowledge of our own literature."

"And an excellent thing," said Lord Waynflete. "I wish people knew how to teach English in schools. It is the thing most to be desired in the present day."

"No," said Miss Avery; "there are two things more necessary than that."

"What are they?"

"That the rich should help the poor—and that all the parsons should agree."

"I think we may as well go," said Adrian to the Vicar, laughing. "Come up to luncheon, won't you? I am going across to drink a glass of Burton's home-brewed ale, and to hear if he has any brilliant ideas on the great news of the day?"

Mr. Rosvere promised to come to luncheon, and Adrian, with Big Dog at his

heels, crossed to the Waynflete Arms. The village street at this point was intersected by a brook, a tributary of the Ashe: Big Dog rushed to bathe in the rapid water, while his master crossed the wooden bridge. Burton, five feet nine in height, four feet nine round the chest, one foot nine around the calf of the leg, was standing at his door.

"Fine morning, my lord," said this burly and genial giant.

"Very pleasant," said Adrian, walking into the bar. "Give me a tankard of your home-brewed ale, Burton."

He was quickly supplied with that foaming liquor. At this point I should much like to enter into a dissertation upon ale. Esquiros, I think it is, who says—"The Latin races eat bread, the Saxon races drink bread." The author of that antithesis touched the truth about ale. You, my good friend

and comrades, would rather have a bottle of the finest Château Yquem that the vineyards of the Marquis de Lur Saluces can produce, than an equal quantity of the finest ale that Bass or Allsopp can brew for you. I don't object. The man who doesn't worship the Lady of Sauternes is simply an idiot; neither more nor less. But if you had a hard day's work to do, mental or physical—if you had to keep your brain clear, and your loins steadfast through a dozen hours of invention, calculation, mountaineering, rowing, cricketing, which would you prefer, Bass or the Marquis? I know well which is the better.

Here's the report (in French) of a Venetian ambassador in England, when Henry VIII.—a man who would (Mr. Froude says) have been perfect if there were no women in the world—was King of England:

"Si Dieu parfait et magnanime s'est mon-

tré prodigue de tant de bienfaits à leur égard, il ne leur a du moins accordé ni l'olivier ni la vigne. Ils ont l'orge fermentée et la cervoise; ce sont là les boissons du pays, et ils les appellent *bière*, *ale* ou *godale*, selon la bonté ou la forces des ingrédients."

I fear Daniele Barbaro did not encounter any really good samples of English ale, for he goes on to state that it was made from apples and turnips—notwithstanding which it was as intoxicating as the strongest wine. However, though neither the olive nor the vine bears perfect fruit within our limits, we can manage malt and hops—and the result is not to be despised.

While I am among ambassadors from Venice—a city which for a long time lived by its diplomacy—I cannot resist quoting what Barbaro's successor, Soranzo, says of English appetite. It has nothing to do with this story, which is an additional reason for

the quotation: "Les Anglais ne se plaisent pas beaucoup au métier des armes, n'ayant aucun moyen de s'y exercer, sauf en temps de guerre; la guerre finie, ils oublient manœuvres et discipline. Il faut cependant dire que dans tous les combats ils montrent un grand courage et dans les dangers beaucoup de présence d'esprit, mais *il faut qu'ils soient accompagnés d'un grand nombre de vivres.*" That is to say—give Englishmen enough to eat and drink, and they'll beat the world. This is no news, in the nineteenth century, of course: but that a Venetian of the sixteenth should have seen it so clearly, is very much to his credit But they educated their diplomatists in Venice; they did not consider them born to the career—like Mr. Austen Layard.

"Well, Barton," said Lord Waynflete to the mighty innkeeper, "what's the news in the village?"

"There's nothing talked about except the Lindesay business, my lord. Everybody's very sorry about that. We *did* hope my lord would have had it."

"You know he always intended to, Barton. Indeed, my father is very much annoyed that his agent did not attend to it. But I don't much care about it myself; in fact, I am rather pleased than otherwise."

"Why so, my lord?" asked Barton, greatly astonished.

"My good fellow, I am not certain that I can explain it to you. Look here. Just now, my father has everything his own way. You daren't say a word against anything he wishes."

"Well, my lord, you don't suppose anybody would go against him—and the kindest gentleman—leastways nobleman—I ever knew."

"Exactly, Barton. That's the very thing.

My father is one of the best of men—and I have excellent reason to know it: but if he were one of the worst you'd obey him just the same. Now here's this Mr. Mowbray coming. He'll wake you up a little. He'll prove to you that a man may be good for something without having a title. He'll freshen the place, and be of considerable advantage to all of us. But I am going across the common to Mr. Métivier. Good-bye, Barton."

Away strode Lord Waynflete, at an easy five miles an hour: long in limb, strong in lung, light in weight, he got over the ground without exertion. As he passed out of the village street on to the common, Barton began to soliloquise:

"Well, he's a nice gentleman, but he's very odd, he is. He's just like anybody else on the road. He'd rather talk to me or old Crawford—or that there gossiping Eliza

—than he would to the Queen or the Prince of Wales, I *do* believe. He *is* an odd gentleman. Says Bill Mitchell to me the other day, says he—'O yes, that's what you Tories calls a nobleman.' 'Yes,' says I, 'and he *is* a *noble* man: don't you remember when he jumped into the Ashe to save that little girl of Wilmot's that had tumbled in? You were there: why didn't *you* jump in?' I fancy Bill Mitchell was shut up, rather."

The subject of this laudatory soliloquy was by this time out of sight. He had passed beyond the village street, which ended with a mill turned by the river Ashe, and was out upon the common. It was invigorating to get upon that common, so elastic was the turf, so pure the air, so beautiful the windings of Ashe river thereby. Adrian may be forgiven for feeling annoyed that the manorial rights over this beautiful open land had escaped his father's hands.

Theirs was the river Ashe, a glorious trout-stream, which bounded the common on the north: but beyond this they had no property or jurisdiction. Optimist though he was, he felt somewhat angry that his father and he were unexpectedly foiled. But he had made up his mind, like Voltaire's hero, that this is the best of all possible worlds; and he resolutely adhered to the idea.

"Old Burton croaks like a raven," he said to himself, as he strode away from the Waynflete Arms. "Why shouldn't this Mowbray come among us and enliven us, if it suits him? We are too exclusive. The Manchester millionaire will come alongside of us; manage the Lindesay estate better than we manage ours; teach us a thing or two, and raise the condition of the poor. Why shouldn't he? I don't see why he shouldn't . . . ."

At this point Lord Waynflete had stood

still, and was reflectively boring a hole in the grass with his stick—while Big Dog, sitting on his haunches, looked gravely on, and attempted to decide in his own mind whether his master was or was not a lunatic. I fear the dear old boy was prejudiced, for he ultimately gave a verdict in the negative. And, when Adrian strode forward again, after poking many meditative holes in the turf, Big Dog rejoicingly rushed at him from a distance, and could have knocked him down had he been knockdownable.

"But still, I'd much rather he didn't," continued Lord Waynflete.

Having given his canine companion a warning to behave properly, with a hazel switch which he had cut on his way, he walked across the common to the hermit's hut. The hut in question stood in about half an acre of ground, close to the river Ashe; it was just a cottage of four rooms,

but those rooms were picturesque. In one of them, low, dark, wainscoted, lived the hermit—he even slept in it; he gave up the rest of the place to his sole servant, an ancient woman, who was horribly deaf, and whose sole idea of food was eggs and bacon and mutton chops.

However, she found the limits of her ideal cookery enlarged. When George Métivier took the place, he found his servant there already. He instructed her. All cooks are or ought to be poets: Métivier was both poet and cook. This bucolic housekeeper soon caught a glimpse of his genius: he taught her to make toast, to boil potatoes, to roast a leg of mutton to the very instant of perfection. Trivial things, say you?—far more important are they than the preparation of mixed messes which are styled *entrées* and *entremêts*.

The Marquis of Wraysbury heard of Mé-

tivier, discovered that with all his eccentricities he was a gentleman, sent him a courteous permission to fish the river Ashe, which is carefully preserved, and is perhaps the finest trout stream in England. Mr. Métivier did not object. He was, either by preference or necessity, frugal; and an occasional dish of trout from the river was a satisfactory addition to his commissariat.

There was no mystery at all about our hermit, nor even any romance. A cadet of the Norman family, whose name he bore, he had early in life selected an eccentric and independent course. He had a passion for philology. Men look at language in different ways. One uses it to conceal his thoughts; another to disclose and perpetuate them. To one it is given to discover and reveal the strength of language; to another its music. But Métivier looked at a language as a geographic adventurer looks at the estuary

of a great river: he longed to find its source. And so he had settled himself down to his favourite study, and had spent his life in elaborating philogical theories, to be ultimately embodied in a mighty work—a thesaurus of languages. Whether his theories were scientific or arbitrary I cannot pretend to say: he had wonderful capacity for mastering languages, and could read, speak, and write, more than Mezzofanti. I have seen excellent good poetry of his in a dozen languages at least. For he was no ordinary Dryasdust: he could use language as well as analyse it.

The family at Ashridge Manor had got on perfectly facile terms with this Norman gentleman, and Lord Waynflete used often to call at the Hut for a chat. Mr. Métivier had courteously declined formal hospitality, but was heartily glad to accept Lord Wraysbury's offer of free entrance to the magnifi-

cent library at Ashridge. The old gentleman—he was about seventy, but full of vigour and freshness—often spent a morning there, and had been of some service to the Marquis by discovering certain rare folios and scarce manuscripts, which had been cast aside as rubbish, and neglected by many generations of Waynfletes. They were priceless.

Métivier had lived in many parts of England—for one of his subsidiary studies was that of dialect. So he had tried all, or nearly all, our shires, and knew the thorough indigenous vernacular English better than almost any Englishman. The difficulty of attaining such knowledge is to be estimated by the rarity of its manifestation in our literature. Mr. Barnes can write the language of Dorset, and Mr. Blackmore the language of Devon: but have we a third contemporary author who dare trust him-

self with a Doric variety of English?

Métivier's settlement at the Hut had been accidental; it was situated in a district whose dialect he desired to study, and its picturesque solitude pleased him. He remained far longer than he had anticipated, from two causes. Of these one was the courtesy of the Waynflete family, which placed at his command one of the noblest libraries in England; but another and stronger one was the fact that at certain times of the year Ashridge Common became populous with gipsies. Their quaint travelling mansions gave life to the great waste of furze and heather; their fires were lighted, and their cauldrons set smoking, and anyone whom they invited to dinner would say the mixture of broth was right excellent, even though hedgehog and squirrel contributed to give it flavour. Métivier was delighted when he found this Bohemian invasion, for

he held that the gipsy language—the Romany speech—was intimately connected with many others, and itself undiluted by alien admixture. So he soon made friends with the wandering tribes, and delighted the chals with tobacco and the chies with gossip, and made, as he conceived, vast discoveries in philology. When his great work is published, we may guess at their worth.

The gipsies sought Ashridge Common because it was a wild wide place, where they met with no interference. Neglected by the lord of the manor, an invalid who lived at Rome, for a great number of years, it had become in some degree public property. About eight miles to the north-east there is a town—or rather a big village—called Rothcastle; at which place once a year is held a mighty horse and cattle and sheep fair, lasting four days. The muddy, miserable village is as populous as Manchester

for the time: farmers come from a dozen counties to buy and sell cattle and sheep: horse-breeders bring their stock, and great London buyers come down to speculate, buying sometimes for a ten-pound note one of those beautiful carriage-horses which, when brought into condition, are cheap at three hundred guineas the pair. Of course this is a place where gipsies congregate: and so, when Rothcastle Fair is approaching, those wanderers have for years been wont to pitch their tents a day or two before on Ashridge Common.

When Lord Waynflete arrived at the Hut, he found the Hermit in dressing-gown and slippers, leaning over his gate, puffing at a short pipe, and of course reading. Never would you find Métivier without a book in his hand, and his pipe in his mouth. When he saw Adrian, he said,

"Ah, my lord, I have got a new book—

that is, I mean, a very old book. Poole sent it to me to-day. He is a wonderful man, Poole."

"Poole!" said Adrian. "What, the tailor?"

"Tailor. Much I want of your *sartor*, with this old gown to wear." And he exhibited the rags thereof with much gusto. "No, no, no! the bibliopole in the street of the Sacred Well—the only man in London who exactly knows where to find any book to be anywhere found. He is my best help —except a gipsy that I have lately made acquaintance with."

"You've some odd acquaintances," said Lord Waynflete, laughing.

"Yes, I like odd people—I like you. But look now, can you read this book?"

He thrust into Adrian's hands the quaint old volume, whose binding and leaves were in a tattered condition.

"Not I," said Waynflete. "I don't go in for such mystical literature. What is it?"

"An ancient Basque liturgy—a wonderful thing—full of poetry. It confirms an old theory of mine. The people of the Basque provinces were Manichæans, you know: they worshipped the Devil. They thought there was nothing to be feared from the Supreme Power of Good, so they made things safe with the Monarch of Evil."

"Rather ingenious," said Adrian.

"Did you ever swear *by Jingo* when you were a boy?"

"Possibly. I remember the oath. But boys generally swear *by Jove!*"

"Paganism is the religion of boyhood, and of the world's boyhood. When life grows serious, Olympus gives way to Calvary. But you remember the oath *by Jingo!* It is Basque, pure Basque, and a

relic of their diabolic creed. Jenko is their name for the devil, whom they worship."

"You'll have to write a book about this," said Adrian.

"I don't know. I have more to do than I am likely to achieve. But will you have some luncheon? You like my old Susanna's cookery, I know. There's some fish and wild rabbits."

"No, thanks. I have asked the parson to come up and lunch with us at Ashridge. But I'll go in and have a glass of your wine."

Métivier got some friend at Bordeaux to send him over claret in the wood: this was his only beverage, and it was always sound and good.

"Have you heard the news?" asked Adrian, as he drank his tumbler of claret.

"What news?"

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"The Lindesay Manor, which my father wanted to buy, has been bought by a rich Manchester man. By the way, he will be your landlord. I hope he won't turn you out—or even raise your rent."

"I hope not," said Métivier, with a smile; "but I have stayed here longer than is my habit, and it would perhaps do me good to move. This is quite certain?"

"O yes. My father had given orders to buy the estate at a very high price, principally because he wished to get the Common into better order. But his attorneys neglected their business, and so this Mr. Mowbray stepped in. However, we may find him a very pleasant neighbour."

"It seems a pity," said Métivier, reflectively. "The Marquis ought to have had that estate: and this beautiful common would soon have been restored to order in his hands. Your Manchester men have such grotesque ideas."

"Ah! we are *la nation boutiquière*," said Waynflete, laughing. "Good-bye, my dear friend—I must stride across the common, or I shall keep lunch waiting, and poor Rosvere will be unhappy. Come along, Big Dog, and leave the rabbits alone."

Thus taking farewell of the philologist, Lord Waynflete started homewards at a quick pace, much to the delight of Big Dog, who loved the excitement of rapid motion.

CHAPTER II.

THE MERCHANT.

MANCHESTER is most unluckily situate in reference to suburbs. In this respect London is certainly the most fortunate of modern cities. When one thinks of Hampstead, Harrow, Richmond, Greenwich, one at once remembers that such pleasant outlying districts have no parallel elsewhere. Hapless Manchester is jammed into the midst of minor Manchesters like Stockport and Rochdale, and you must leave it many miles behind to get a breath of fresh air. The nearest place that is healthy and picturesque is Alderley Edge, in the County of Chester:

there many Manchester men congregate: there Mr. Mowbray had what he called a "nice little place." It *was* a nice little place: but he had only ten acres of ground, and the billiard-room was too small—it would contain only three tables. So, as Mowbray and Co. were millionaires of the first force, the head of the firm was naturally somewhat disgusted with so small an establishment. Hence he had been looking around him for a satisfactory investment. And at last he thought he had found the very thing.

Edward Mowbray was a widower of forty, with one daughter, who bore the romantic name of Ethel Evelyn. She was eight years old; a queer little creature with an *olivâtre* complexion, with the darkest of eyes, with the longest and softest of eyelashes. Her mother had been half a Spaniard: the merchant married her for love, I verily believe,

but it turned out that she possessed multitudinous moidores. Mowbray and Co., hitherto fortunate, soon became more fortunate than ever. They beat all their competitors. The chief of the firm went on what is called the "junior partner" principle. His clerks became in time his partners, with authority and interest in the business, though of course their shares were small. This plan had been originated by Edward Mowbray's father, and was found to answer admirably. The firm of Mowbray and Co. was registered as Mowbray, Smith, Brown, Robertson, Lestrange, and Jenkins; but if you had multiplied by twenty the amount drawn annually by the five junior partners, you would probably not have reached Mr. Mowbray's yearly income.

A broad-shouldered man, not unlike John Bright in stature and build, but with a finer figure, Mr. Mowbray was one of the plea-

santest fellows in the world, if he always had his own way. His favourite virtue was obstinacy. Now this is really an excellent thing, if you are the head of a great firm, or chief of a great army, or leader of a ministry. A man who *will* have his own way, and disregards all consequences, is generally successful—vacillation is ruin. Better be resolutely wrong than intermittently right. Mowbray in matters of business always "backed his own opinion," and his success astonished the world. Those who have studied mathematical metaphysics are well aware that this is a safe thing to do . . . if you can do it. Mowbray could not help doing it.

Accident of travel had once brought him to the village of Ashridge, where at the Waynflete Arms he got excellent midday refreshment in the form of home-made bread and double Gloucester cheese, and home-brewed ale. The massive landlord, Burton,

had told him some of the news of the neighbourhood—among it that the manor and estate of Lindesay would be sold when the last Squire Lindesay, at that time eighty-five, departed this life. Mr. Mowbray turned out for a walk into the Lindesay woods. They pleased him much. He selected a site for a fine mansion. He decided where he would have conservatories, hothouses, melon-pits, mushroom-beds. He wrote to his confidential agent in London from the village inn that very day.

Mowbray's confidential agent, in matters of this kind, was a briefless barrister of six years' standing, named Terrell. This gentleman had but one fault—he was too clever by half. His agile brain was not without its value when controlled by an astute and serious brain like Mowbray's; and Mr. Mowbray found Terrell of immense value when certain difficult things were to be

done, or certain delicate inquiries to be made.

In this case it was so. Terrell knew where information about the Lindesay estate was to be obtained. There was no pride about this Bohemian barrister. He went and ate tripe with an attorney's managing clerk, and sang a comic song for that cad's delectation, in order to get at the facts. He got at the facts. He kept Mr. Mowbray so promptly informed of everything which occurred, that the merchant was able to forestall Lord Wraysbury.

This very fact, of which he soon became aware, gave Mowbray an intense relish for his bargain. The man, you see, is a Radical. He hates and despises aristocrats. He has no reason in the world for disliking the Marquis of Wraysbury . . . . except that he is a marquis, which is surely reason enough. What right has any fellow to be a

marquis? The title may have meant something once, when there were marches to guard: now it is merely a feather in the cap of a fool. So thought Mr. Mowbray, who knew well that he could never by any possibility become a marquis. If it had been possible, his opinion might have been modified.

On the very day when Lord Wraysbury received the news that Lindesay had passed into other hands, its owner put in an appearance at Ashridge. A gig from the nearest station deposited him at the Waynflete Arms; and Burton, whose memory was not very clear, had not the slightest recollection of his previous guest. Mrs. Burton, the most notable of housewifes, had an excellent bedroom to offer, with linen lavender-scented over a bed of down: so Mr. Mowbray took it at once, and was perfectly satisfied with his quarters. If you want to live in clover,

try a village inn situate in some unsophisticated part of the country.

The arrival of this stranger in the village caused a considerable sensation. Burton, who liked the open air, sat outside on a bench the whole day, and told everybody, with an air of intense mystery, that there was a gentleman staying with him. Of course Crawford turned up in the afternoon, and heard the news, and barbarously maintained that the new comer was a detective come to raise the taxes. Having made Burton unhappy with this theory, he set sedulously to work to intoxicate himself with fourpenny ale. I fear he failed.

Mr. Mowbray spent a few days at the Waynflete Arms without anybody's suspecting who he was. He walked all over the Lindesay estate, and formed a pretty accurate notion of the value of its woods and fields. There was a grand site for a man-

sion; lower, certainly, than Ashridge Manor, but still finely situate. There he would build. You looked over a wide plain beyond the river Ashe, and many hamlets brown and dim-discovered spires, and a mighty river in the distance.

There was much discussion as to who he might be during the commencement of his stay at the Waynflete Arms, but nobody could find out. Miss Avery and Burton happened to be in a state of acute enmity at this period: yet she came over to pump the colossal innkeeper, being resolved to get information, if there were any to be got. However, he had nothing to tell her. The stranger was a mysterious stranger, unquestionably; he went wandering about the woods this dreadfully chilly weather; it seemed likely that he might be a magic-man, looking for treasure. Having communicated this information to Miss Avery,

the elephantine Burton retired to his private room, leaving her to digest it as she might.

The man who had puzzled these simple gossip-loving villagers was a man of action. Soon did they find out who he was. Within a week there was an encampment of builders—for the village had no accommodation, so Mowbray put them under canvas. It was a pretty big encampment, too; for Mowbray had determined to build a splendid mansion, and to build it fast. And this is a world wherein anything can be done fast . . . *with money.*

Money, however, is not the only thing. There are multitudes of weak people in the world who fancy that if they had money they could do wonders. They are quite wrong. If they could do wonders they would make money. The man who knows how to use money knows how to obtain it.

Put into the hands of these feeble folk the wealth they pine for, and they will fritter it away. Mowbray knew how to make money, and knew how to use it. He had resolved to build a perfect mansion on the Lindesay estate, and he went to work for this purpose in the straightforward fashion of a thorough man of business. The quietude of Ashridge suffered sudden revolution.

Since the days when Beckford was building Fonthill Abbey, and George the Magnificent could not get a mason to work at Windsor, nothing had been done faster than Mr. Mowbray's building. It seemed to rise like an exhalation. The villagers thought it almost a magical business; the dwellers at Ashridge Manor, who looked down upon the Lindesay estate from their lofty windows, could actually see the mansion grow, day after day. It was of the whitest possible stone, and quite dazzled the eyes

of the Marchioness. It amused her to watch it growing, as if it were a living creature; to notice from the windows of the breakfast-room the heightening and widening process. Always on the spot—for his Manchester business went by itself, and he could afford to ride his hobby—Mr. Mowbray kept matters going at a rate that amazed the bystanders. Begun in February, the great house was actually furnished and inhabited before the end of August.

Lord Waynflete, who, as we have seen, was in the habit of pervagating the neighbourhood, and talking to everybody he met, of course came across Mr. Mowbray soon after that gentleman's advent. The merchant settled himself at the "Waynflete Arms," and seemed quite contented with his quarters. He ate Mrs. Burton's scraggy chops, and drank the big landlord's beer, as if he had never tasted venison or claret. In

truth, like many other men who have devoted their youth to business—the hottest passion of the English—Mr. Mowbray had no palate. He kept a French *chef*, and gave good dinners, because it was a mark of opulence; and for the same reason he would sign a cheque for a few thousands to purchase a picture by some great artist: but in his inmost heart he wondered why people cared for the dinner or the landscape. A sensible man in his own groove, he could not understand other people's preferences, and was apt to despise what he could not understand. The first time he saw young Lord Waynflete swinging gaily down the village street, with Big Dog boisterously bounding from side to side thereof, Mr. Mowbray was simply cynical in his soliloquy.

"What good in the world is that young fellow?" he said to himself, looking through the window of Burton's parlour. "He came

in with the Conqueror, I suppose, but he'll go out when we tradesmen conquer England. Look at him! He thinks the place belongs to him. He thinks all the people are his serfs. I've no doubt he cares more for that great hound than for all the peasants on his father's estate. I wonder what his father is like?"

Not a sensible soliloquy for a man of Mowbray's intellect and experience. No: but unluckily some of the most sagacious men of Mowbray's class are weak on this one point. The thing is lamentable, yet explicable. They are the direct growth of commerce. Buying and selling has made them what they are. In their own narrow groove they are admirable, inimitable. But they understand nothing beyond that. Especially are they ignorant of the history of the land wherein they live—of the race whereof they are members. One of the

most enlightened of them published his preference for the *Times* newspaper over Thucydides. He saw the power of the Present, but could not understand that it was the Child of the Past. Perhaps, had he been asked to consider what relations the Present might have to the Future, he would have reconsidered his theory. If the *Times* of the day had lessons for his children, the chronicles of our forefathers have lessons for us. But, if you tell a man of business in a chief thoroughfare of a great nineteenth century city that the city and its wide street and its superb shop would not have existed—that the race of which he is an independent member would have been a servile race—but for what was wrought a thousand years ago, by Kings and Bishops and Earls—he will think you are talking nonsense. Yet he would probably be offended if you told him that his own exer-

tions would have no effect on posterity.

Scarcely had Mr. Mowbray finished his contemptuous soliloquy, when Adrian entered, having told Burton, who was blocking up the passage, to bring him a tankard of ale. He knew who Mowbray was, and saw no reason to conceal his knowledge. He spoke to him at once.

"Mr. Mowbray, I believe," he said. "I am Lord Waynflete. We are to have you for a neighbour, I hear. I am quite glad of it."

"Glad!" said Mowbray, in a tone of unmistakable surprise.

"Why, yes, I think so. My father wanted to buy the property, for two or three reasons; but he will soon get over his disappointment. You are going to build; you will set the people's blood circulating; you will do good among them, and stimulate others to do good."

The giant landlord brought in the ale, and Adrian took a mighty draught.

"You are quite a Liberal, my lord," said Mowbray.

"A Liberal! Of course I am. So is everybody with any common-sense."

"Why, I thought yours was a Tory family. It *is*, surely?"

"Of course it is," replied Adrian, with a laugh, "and I am a Tory. In politics, as in everything else, discussion depends on definitions, Mr. Mowbray. What do *you* call a Liberal or a Tory?"

Mowbray was rather taken aback. This young man's easy style of conversation was new to him. To tell the honest truth, having had little intercourse with the folk whom Lodge delights to chronicle, he was surprised to find this future Marquis with a prodigious rent-roll so frank and unaffected. As I have

said, Adrian was as haughty as his father; but he met everybody on equal terms, for all that.

Mowbray began to talk about free-trade, Church and State, the ballot, *et cetera*, in a fluent but extremely vague style.

Lord Waynflete listened attentively, and finished his ale.

"A Tory," said Adrian, when the dissertation was ended, "is a man who believes that England should be governed by gentlemen. A Liberal is a man who believes that any Englishman may become a gentleman if he likes. I am both. But why should two strangers talk politics the first time they meet? We shall be good acquaintances, I hope, Mr. Mowbray. Indeed, if you will come up and make our acquaintance at any time you like, I am sure my father and the Marchioness will be delighted. There's always some luncheon at

one. I should like to show you over the old house, though your own will of course make it look very small."

Mowbray somehow seemed to grow more stiff and shy as Adrian grew more frank. He could not make out this perfectly natural young noble. He suspected a dodge. He positively thought that the Marquis wanted in some way to take advantage of him, and had sent his son to open the campaign. So he grew short and dry in his answers, and couldn't promise to come to luncheon, and altogether gave Lord Waynflete an unsatisfactory impression of him.

"The man's a prejudiced ass," thought Adrian, as he and Big Dog made their way toward the common. "And yet he looks as if he had brain. That broad forehead and that quick dark eye can hardly belong to a fool. He has been brought up among absurd mercantile prejudices, I suppose. He

evidently has a fine strong hatred for the peerage. Poor fellow!"

Mr. Mowbray after this interview kept very much out of Adrian's way. He had formed the idea that the young lord must have had some interested motive in being courteous towards him. Adrian did not trouble himself much about it: besides, he was away a good deal, for the Marchioness must have her London, and the Royal Academy and the Opera were not to be neglected—though Lord Waynflete preferred a real sunset to a Turner, preferred the song of a thrush to that of Tietjens or Patti. So Waynflete House in Park Lane was inhabited, and was one of the most attractive exclusive houses in London. Happy the man who was admitted to the Marchioness's Fridays. Why Friday, askest thou, O reader? *Dies Veneris.*

So, while they were in town, Mowbray

mansion grew. For the merchant actually called it Mowbray Mansion, after the fashion of Brighton lodging-letters. *It grew.* Why, Jack's beanstalk was nothing to it. Beyond the house itself, which was beginning to look like Buckingham Palace, with an eruption of towers and turrets, there were the stables—which were about the size of the Charing Cross railway station. And then on the other side stretched acres of glass—conservatories, hothouses, pineries, orchard houses—which seemed intended to supply Covent Garden with all the flowers and fruit that all London could use. Mowbray Mansion became a splendid place, unique, unequalled, the priceless bagatelle of a millionaire. And, as I have already said, it was finished and inhabited by August.

Not till September did the Waynfletes leave London for Ashridge. Their party was increased. The Marchioness had brought

with her her great friend, Miss Lechmere—her cousin, coeval, schoolfellow. They had been belles the same year, and led the gay round of the London season together. But Miss Lechmere hadn't married. She rather looked down on the whole race of men, and at any rate contrived to appal the marrying ones. She was a handsome girl and a wealthy one; but, unluckily for herself, she set up for being a "superior woman." She had begun very early. Being the only child of a very rich man, who died in her infancy, she was quite a little queen of gold when she was in short frocks and frilled trousers. Her mother, a foolish pretty woman, much younger than the husband she had survived, married again, thereby forfeiting a few thousands a year, and the guardianship of Jabez Lechmere's daughter. Certain appointed guardians and trustees took immediate possession of her, under

the sanction of the Court of Chancery; and she was sent for education to a famous "seminary" at Blackheath, where likewise her Cousin Alice (a second or third cousin, I fancy) was receiving instruction. So soon as this Lily Lechmere [yes, she was baptised Lily, though she was more in the dahlia style] had been a year or two at this same seminary, she was everybody's mistress. Partly through the fame of her money, partly through her own singular self-confidence and conceit, she was able to subjugate her schoolfellows, the governesses, and finally the serene and austere and rigorous mistress of the establishment. Miss Lechmere was such "a superior young lady." She quite enslaved her pretty cousin Alice —who, however, was by good fortune removed from the school at an early age. They did not meet again till their collision in their first season. Alice, who was a pauper

—that is to say, her father could not give her above seven thousand pounds—was so pretty, so witty, so gentle, so fascinating, that she actually divided the Empire of the West with "that wonderfully handsome girl"—"that uncommonly clever girl"—"that temptingly rich girl"—Miss Lechmere. The Lily had forty thousand a year, yet found no mate. Alice, the pretty little pauper, won her Marquis the first time they met.

In truth, Miss Lechmere was difficult from two causes. First and foremost, wealth made her mistrust her wooers. She naturally fancied that her many admirers were thinking of her property rather than of herself. She formed wild schemes of getting out of her own circle, and playing Incognita somewhere—a penniless Incognita. There was a touch of romance in that "superior" head of hers: and she thought that if she

could disguise herself as a governess or a maidservant, and be wooed and won in such a condition, she might be sure of true love. But unluckily she could not hit upon any device for carrying out such a scheme.

However, the second cause of her being still in her virginity was almost, if not quite, as effectual as the first. She was so very superior. She looked down upon most women . . . and upon all men. She took no part in the great Amazonian movement for reducing men to their proper secondary place, simply because she had a contempt for her own sex. It was almost equal to Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's, who said that the only thing which reconciled her to being a woman was, that she should not have to marry one.

Even "superior women" find their opinions slightly modified by time: and, when Lily Lechmere found her cousin Alice

a Marchioness and a mother, she began to think that she had wasted time. Alice had the noblest of husbands and the prettiest of little daughters. Miss Lechmere was envious. The cousins, after some years' severance, had met this season by accident; Miss Lechmere patronized the Marchioness, became her intimate companion, and made her invite her to Ashridge. Miss Lechmere had formed a great scheme: she would marry Lord Waynflete. He was a few years her junior—but that was just what she liked. He would be a nice obedient husband. Everybody said he was such a good young man—and yet so clever. Lily Lechmere decided that he was just the kind of person for a superior woman like herself to marry and educate. With this intent had she made the Marchioness bring her to Ashridge.

Poor Adrian! How little did he know the terrible future designed for him!

He, like his stepmother, had brought a friend—Harry Fane, a cornet in the Guards; and in this case, also, it was an old schoolfellow. They had been at Eton together; and Waynflete had saved Fane from drowning, and had loved him like a brother ever since. Yet you would hardly predicate much sympathy between them. Lord Waynflete I have introduced to you. Fane may be briefly described as a man of immeasurable indolence, chequered with sudden short bursts of impulse. Adrian found him at his rooms in the Albany, and brought him down by main force. Fane subsided into the apartment allotted to him; went to bed early, and breakfasted there; and occupied the remainder of the day in dressing for dinner.

So he was not one of the breakfast party on the morning after their arrival—which had occurred late at night, when a

jolly hasty supper of devilled turkey and broiled game had been their welcome. It was a fine misty September morning, promising a sultry day. The scene from those breakfast-room windows was somewhat changed: across the Ashe, amid the woods of Lindesay, Mowbray Mansion glared white, with a supplementary establishment of conservatories flashing in the morning sun.

"Dear me, Alice," said Miss Lechmere to the Marchioness, "what a splendid place that seems to be! Who lives there? Why, it is almost as fine as Chatsworth?"

The Marchioness told her friend the history of Mowbray Mansion; and how Mr. Mowbray was a widower and a millionaire; and more of the same kind. And Miss Lechmere at once began to weigh the difference between having a marquis or a millionaire for a husband.

"Mowbray seems to have been making

progress," said Lord Wraysbury, after he had glanced at his correspondence. "That's a tremendous place of his, Adrian: we should be nowhere, if we hadn't the good fortune to be on the top of a hill."

"I suspect he would say that Providence unfairly favours the Tories," said his son. "What right have we to our hill?" he would argue. "Why isn't there at least as high a hill ready for a Manchester man with a million?"

"Is that the sort of fellow, do you think?" asked the Marquis.

"I fancy so. I met him once, and have heard much about him in town which confirms my impression of him. He belongs to the class who talk about 'bloated aristocrats.'"

"Well, I regret that," remarked Lord Wraysbury. "I don't at all want a neighbour who insists on quarrelling with me."

"But," interposed Miss Lechmere, "he may not be so very shocking. I have known one or two very charming millionaires."

"The magic million covers many sins," said the Marchioness, laughing.

"It does, indeed, mamma," responded Adrian; "and I am afraid that in this man's case it will have to cover an unusual number. I had a colloquy with him once, you know; I tried to be civil; he showed himself a churl. I have heard a good deal of his doings since. I fear from report that he will take delight in being what is called *nasty* to a neighbour who is so wicked as to be a Marquis."

"Shall we survive, do you think, Adrian?" asked Lord Wraysbury.

"I hope so, sir; but from all I hear, this is the temper of the man. And I fear we may find that he takes pleasure in that

style of petty annoyance which is always in a neighbour's power."

"I fear you are prejudiced, Lord Waynflete," said Miss Lechmere. "Surely very few men would condescend to such conduct."

"I heartily hope not, Miss Lechmere," said the Marquis. "I most earnestly hope that the rumours Adrian has heard are unfounded. But the truth is that in these days there is a great deal of silly prejudice, even among men of Mr. Mowbray's class: and I can quite understand his disliking, and even despising me, because I happen to be a peer. Himself all his life a tradesman, he has had no opportunity of learning that if there had been no peers in England long ago, there would be no millionaires to-day. Admitting that I am no use in the world, the stout old Baron, my forefather, who helped to bully King John into signing the Great Charter, was some use in his time."

"You don't often make so long a speech," said the Marchioness. "We are all convinced and converted—even this Radical, Lily. Are you gentlemen going to shoot today? And, O, Adrian, where is Mr. Fane?"

"Fane!" said Lord Waynflete: "why, he is enjoying his beauty-sleep just now. I dare say we shall see him at dinner. We must make our arrangements without him."

"Well, what are those arrangements to be? If you mean to shoot, we might meet you somewhere, and have an out-door luncheon. What do you think, Lily?"

"Very pleasant indeed," replied Miss Lechmere, graciously, "on such a beautiful day as this."

"Ralph tells me there are a good many coveys of birds on Ashdown Hill," said Lord Wraysbury. "Shall we try that, Adrian?"

"I'll meet you there, sir," said his son. "I'll just take my gun down through the

lower fields, for I should like to reconnoitre the village, and see a little of what Mr. Mowbray has been doing."

"A good idea," said the Marquis, who was very seldom seen in the village himself. The church was in his park, and when the hounds met in the neighbourhood, they met on his lawn, and there was seldom occasion for him to go beyond the limits of his own demesne. He was less likely to do it now, when there was a foe on his frontier. His estates stretched for miles away behind the hill towards Rothcastle: indeed he could ride right into that town without leaving his own land.

"Very good," said the Marchioness. "Then I shall order luncheon to be taken up to that pretty clump of trees in the glen below Ashdown. It is a charming spot, Lily: there is a beautiful clear well, the source of a brook we call the Petteril."

So it was settled. The Marquis, with a couple of setters, and Ralph, the head keeper, went towards Ashdown. His son, followed by Big Dog (who was always a grave spectator of sport) and a favourite Clumber spaniel called Flora, clever as she was beautiful, strode down the hill. His leading idea was certainly not sport; he was curious to see how things had been going in his absence from home; but he made his way out of the park into some promising turnips (or turmuts, which is it?), where Flora put up a covey, and he brought down two with the promptitude of a good shot. Flora retrieved them, and he tied them together, and gave them to Big Dog to carry. That canine celebrity was never more happy than when he had something in charge.

Adrian did not follow his covey, but struck across to the village. Burton was standing before his door, and a good many

people were drinking their ale outside. It is picturesque to see the thirsty Briton drinking great draughts beneath the big tree that stands—or ought to stand—in front of every village hostelry: but unluckily those draughts are too often poisonous.

"Well, Burton," said Lord Waynflete, "I am glad to see you look as well as ever. Here are the first birds I have killed this year. I know you like 'em."

"Very much obliged indeed, my lord. I haven't a very strong appetite, and a little bit of game seems to do me good. We shall all be glad to have you back again, my lord."

"I'm very glad to come, for I'm tired of London. I suppose there's no news."

"News! my lord. I should think there was. Why, Ashridge is quite a different place from what it used to be. You won't know it. It's put my head in a regular muzzle."

Perhaps the worthy landlord meant *muddle.*

"I hope it hasn't muzzled your ale, Burton. I'll come into the bar and taste it, and then you can tell me the story."

"I can't think of half, my lord—not half. Have you heard tell of the Mowbray Hotel?"

"What?"

"Why, the new Squire have built quite a grand inn at the top of the street, just on the common—and there's a landlord, a Mr. Flanagan, that looks just like a squire himself, and rides a chestnut cob they say he gave a hundred and fifty for—and there's a billiard-room, and a coffee-room, though I can't see the good of a room for nothing but coffee, and twenty bedrooms, and stabling and loose boxes for no end of horses."

Burton paused for absolute lack of breath.

"By Jove!" said Adrian, with such em-

phasis that Big Dog jumped up and barked —a bark you could hear a mile off—" the man must be mad. What in the world is another inn wanted here for? What custom can this new place get?"

"It gets some custom, my lord. Squire Mowbray has lots of people come to stay with him, and their servants and horses and traps goes to the Mowbray Hotel. But it wouldn't much matter to him if there weren't no custom worth mentioning."

"How so?"

"Don't you see, my lord, this here house is the Waynflete Arms. The Squire thinks he'll be a bigger man than your lordship's father, so he builds a bigger place than Ashridge Manor, and calls it Mowbray Mansion —and a sight bigger inn than the Waynflete Arms, and calls it the Mowbray Hotel. That's how I take it. But I likes my own old place better than his."

Well he might, for the inn was an old-timbered house, which had been a monastic grange: its picturesque gables and quaint casements and raftered rooms were in tolerably strong contrast to the commonplace architecture of the new hotel. And the monks had evidently stored away good liquor, for there were deep cool dry cellars, too vast for Burton's need.

Lord Waynflete was taken aback by this intelligence. He sat down in a huge carved chair which was the pride of the bar, took a cigar from his case, lighted it, and then said,

"Now, Burton, give me some more ale and take some yourself. Then you can tell me any other news you've got. I've a good two hours to spare."

Burton obeyed orders as to the ale. After a long draught, he replied,

"You'll have to ask Eliza, my lord. She

can tell you everything, and what she can't tell she can invent. My head's in a muzzle."

"Have a cigar—that's the best cure," said Adrian, offering him his case.

"No, thank ye, my lord, not one of yours. You were so good as to give me one once, and before it was half finished I felt so dizzy like that I had to go to bed. But by your lordship's leave I'll smoke a pickwick."

He took one of those penny cylinders from a box on the shelf, and began smoking as if he enjoyed it. And why should he not? The peasant prefers his fourpenny ale to the finest claret. I once gave an old lady who kept a village shop a glass of excellent Sauterne, and she stoutly maintained it was cider.

"Now, Burton," said Lord Waynflete, after a pause, "you can think of some more news to tell me by this time. Let's have it."

"Well, my lord, there's the common."

"Ah, what about the common? I hope Mr. Mowbray is getting it into better order."

"He's been main strict," said Burton. "He's put on a lot of men to watch, and brought a lot of people up before the magistrates for cutting turf and furze, and digging sand. He got young Lane sent to prison because his terrier bitch killed a rabbit there. He won't let the old women pick up sticks, as they always used to, and he's warned off all the gipsies."

"Indeed! What do the gipsies say to that?"

"You know Black Jack Johnson, my lord?"

Adrian knew that worthy well, having often talked to him on the common. He was a singularly dark man, about seven feet high, about thirty years old, wonderfully lithe and active. Of pure gipsy blood, he

was reckoned a chief among them, and was always at the head of rather a numerous following. He dealt largely in horses, and was of course a constant attendant at Rothcastle Fair.

"Yes," said Adrian, "I know him."

"He was through here the other day, not with his people, but alone, going after a horse, he told me. However, I don't believe all that *he* says. He was drinking gin and ale in the tap—I never saw such a man for gin and ale—when somebody told him about Squire Mowbray's orders. Well, he *did* swear; and then he was quiet for ever so long, and drank a lot more gin and ale. But he stayed after all the others, for he was to sleep in my tallat—he never will sleep on a bed, like a Christian. And the last thing he said to me was, 'Look here, Burton, we Romans' (that's what he said) 'have had Ashridge Common for our camps

before this newfangled Squire's grandfather was born, if he ever had one. We mean to keep it. You come out on the heath the week before Rothcastle Fair, and you'll see more of our chimneys smoking than you ever saw before, or ever will again.' And up he got and went out to the loft, and I haven't seen him since."

"Thank you, Burton," said Lord Waynflete, at the close of this narrative. "I think you have told me quite enough news for one morning. And I haven't time now to go and see Eliza, who I dare say would tell me at least twice as much. Good-bye. I must be off to luncheon."

He walked up the street of the little village, just to see the new inn. There it was, a square edifice in the reddest brick, with ample stabling. Adrian noticed among the group outside a person who answered Burton's description of the landlord: his com-

panions, four or five in number, were coachmen and grooms. The place was quite in the style of a railway hotel in a hunting country: in this quiet vicinage, far from a railway and from anything like a populous town, it looked ridiculous. Even at Rothcastle, famous for its fair and its bribery (for it returns one member to Parliament), the Mowbray Hotel would have been too large for the place.

Lord Waynflete, who was almost equally annoyed and amused, turned back, recrossed the Ashe, and went up the hill to luncheon.

CHAPTER III.

THE FOUNDER OF THE FIRM.

EDWARD MOWBRAY was one of the best fellows that ever sprang from Manchester, a city where good fellows are not few. He was courteous and genial with his equals, and very generous to his inferiors; he acknowledged no superior. Rather illogically, he thought it right to be loyal to the Sovereign; but he regarded the House of Lords with supreme contempt, and bitterly detested any individual member of the peerage with whom he came into contact. That anybody should be proud of his ancestors seemed to him immeasurably

absurd: yet it was pretty clear that but for his immediate ancestor, his father, he would never have been about the richest man in Lancashire. Of course he respected his sire accordingly: but he could not understand why men should venerate the remote sire of their sires, who had founded their family at the date of the Conquest or earlier. This he regarded as the climax of imbecility.

What man was there in England better than himself, Edward Mowbray? He was conscious of a fine physical organization, so sound that he never dreamt of illness; of a brain clear and strong and prompt, whose previsions and decisions were the envy of his brother merchants; of stored funds so vast that he could indulge almost any caprice with impunity, even though it were to manage an opera-house or start a daily newspaper; of a great business, that went on producing money like a mighty machine,

with the very slightest supervision on his part. A man must have a strong, a well-balanced mind to see clearly and act wisely in such a position. Edward Mowbray would have done better than most men, but for a fierce dislike for the hereditary nobility, which some of his facetious friends attributed to his having been refused by an Earl's daughter in the days of his hot youth. This was Manchester chaff, no doubt: Mowbray, even when young, must have had too great a contempt for the peerage to desire an alliance with it. However, the fact remained—he detested and despised the aristocracy.

His father, also Edward Mowbray, was the founder of the great firm of Mowbray, Smith, Brown, Rogerson, Lestrange, and Jenkins. His grandfather was the earliest ancestor of whom he had any knowledge. Old Reuben Mowbray had an excellent sur-

name or sirename; but how he got it was quite a mystery to himself and to the villagers of Rington-in-the-Clay, where he was supposed to have been born, and where he lived a long and singularly happy and useless life. No registry of his birth could be found: and, as he was unquestionably the oldest inhabitant, nobody could well be expected to remember it. People calculated that he was a hundred and ten when he died. He was what the villagers called "half-saved;" not absolutely imbecile, and capable in his prime of doing a good day's work, he was at the same time eccentric upon occasion, and not always to be relied upon. As he grew older, he grew shrewder: and his quaint sayings passed into village proverbs. He was probably about fifty when somebody made up her mind to marry him.

This was one Martha Kane, a young

woman of about forty, who had come into Rington-in-the-Clay a good many years before, as lady'smaid at Rington Park. She came from the far North somewhere. When the family at the Park went abroad, she decided not to go: she rented a small cottage, and did needlework for anybody who would employ her; but she evidently had saved some money in her occupation as lady'smaid. She lived very fairly, for her position; had a bit of meat for dinner twice a week; kept poultry and bees, and made a little money by them; and always seemed cheerful.

Reuben, who knew everybody in the village—which contained about seventy houses—liked nothing better than to talk to anybody who would talk in return to him. He talked with an inconsecutive quaintness which it is impossible to represent. His addled old brain produced, from the revolu-

tion which had taken place within it, notions which never would have occurred to him in a sane state. Even the parson used to say that he sometimes got a new idea from Reuben.

A new idea Martha Kane got, at any rate—namely, that she would marry him. She was forty: at twenty, it was reported, the little lady'smaid had been pretty, with lots of gay gold ringlets, and an *alto relievo* style. That was over. Martha's somewhat scanty hair was iron-grey, and she was decidedly scraggy, when she ordered Reuben to marry her. Reuben obeyed.

The parish laughed. Would that parish have dared to smile if it could have foreseen the great result . . . Mowbray the millionaire?

By-and-by a boy arrived, Edward Mowbray the elder. He had more steadfast brains than his father. He liked work. The

village schoolmaster was delighted with him; he was first in everything, but beat the master himself in figures. His mother died when he was about twelve, and left nothing behind her except some quaint old fragments of silver and lace and brocade, the spoils of her lady'smaid career. She had been living on a small annuity. The boy stayed on in the village; got occasional work from the farmers; managed to live and sometimes to help his old father.

When he was nineteen he was drawn for the militia. England was at war, and people dreaded an invasion. Edward Mowbray hated the thought of wearing a red coat. With sevenpence halfpenny in his pocket, and without a word to anyone, he left Rington village behind him, and walked away without any choice of road. The road which he took led to Manchester. It was three days before he reached that city, destined to

acknowledge him as one of its greatest men; and, though he had met kindness on his way, his small stock of coin was gone, and he was footsore and hungry.

A widow who kept a small general shop in the suburbs took pity on him, and gave him a red herring for supper, and allowed him to sleep in an outhouse. She was a young widow, and pitied the motherless boy. Twenty years later Edward Mowbray found her out, and settled on her three hundred a year for life.

I suppose he saw a little starvation before he got any work. But by-and-by he was hired as porter at a warehouse. He did his work manfully. He showed intelligence. It was found that he could read and write. He was promoted to a clerkship.

As a clerk, he threw himself into the business of his master. He worked punctually and accurately, and, when he had be-

come intimate with the business, ventured on modest suggestions. Luck favours careful men like Mowbray. One day his watchful eye detected a scheme for an enormous swindle, which would have half-ruined the firm.

Within a week he was a junior partner. I need not follow his career step by step. By-and-by he married a wealthy widow, whose consols gave him considerable influence in the firm. Just twenty years after he had entered the establishment, glad to sweep out the warehouse and to harness the dray-horses, he had become the head of the house.

He went down to Rington-in-the-Clay to look for his father. There was the old gentleman, eighty-nine years old, living in the cottage where his successful son was born. Reuben's brain was still warped, but it was clearer than in earlier days. Between the parish and the parson he would have

been well cared for: but his son, having no time to spare from his business, had at intervals sent a banknote to the clergyman anonymously—for the benefit of Reuben Mowbray. He would not return to his native village till he could return with his ambition fulfilled.

Rington Park was for sale. Edward Mowbray bought the estate, furnished the house, and established his father there as Squire. Reuben accepted the situation. He evidently *ought* to have been a Squire. I have said that his ancestry was untraceable: may he not have been the descendant of a good race? Strange to say, from the time that he was installed as the master of Ringwood Park, a change came upon him. He seemed more himself in the apparel of a gentleman than in the clothing of a labourer, which he had worn all his life. His intellect grew clearer. I have heard men

who sat at his table—and he gave capital dinners—speak in the highest terms of his judgment on politics and theology and wine. Now a plebeian may be orthodox on matters political and theological, but surely, surely, surely he can never be a judge of wine!

Whence I infer that there must have been good blood in the veins of old Reuben Mowbray. And this is rendered more probable from the fact that before he became the Squire of the parish he was generally regarded as a lunatic—an opinion seldom or never uttered thereafter.

Twenty-one years did Reuben Mowbray reign at Rington Park, every year growing clearer in brain. His son would come thither as a guest, but his father should be master. More than this, he carefully concealed from his son, Edward Mowbray the younger, the facts of the case, and made the boy believe that Rington Park was an an-

cient family estate, and that his grandfather had always been the Squire.

The young man of course found out in time that this was false: and I think it was one reason of his spite against the patrician race. He had been duped into thinking himself the representative of an old family, and his grandfather, *the Squire*, had been a day-labourer. It made him very wild. It made him resolve to be a Squire of another sort. And when his father died, and he became the head of the great house of Mowbray and Co., he carried out that resolve, as we have seen. Reuben Mowbray's long life was over years ago, and he had no one to interfere with him. He sold Rington Park, about which there clung unpleasant traditions concerning that grandfather of his. The old gentleman, as I have said, gave good dinners, and held his own in conversation with his guests. But he had

his eccentricities. When driving along the road in his carriage and pair, if he saw any peculiarly unhappy family of tramps, he would take them up and carry them off to Rington Park, and give them an ample meal, and dismiss them with some money. Naturally this became known among the great association of vagabonds which has existed in England since the dissolution of the Monasteries: and Rington Park received a succession of very eccentric guests. Material for a Beggars' Opera might often have been found in the servants' hall at Rington, when vagrants of every possible kind, gipsies, tinkers, horse-stealers, cadgers, *et hoc genus omne*, received princely entertainment, in the form of cold beef and strong ale, by order of the Squire.

Edward Mowbray the younger had no sympathy with this eccentricity of his grandfather's. He rightly considered indiscrimin-

ate almsgiving a curse. He would have deemed it almost a crime—certainly a breach of the fundamental laws of political economy—to give a beggar a penny. Not heartily therefore did he revere the memory of his grandfather; and he was glad to sever all connexion between his family and Rington-in-the-Clay. He sold the estate, as I have said—and felt as if he breathed more freely.

The lady he married was Spanish on the mother's side. He met her at Rhyl, on the coast of North Wales, with her father, who was a languid Englishman. She fascinated him at once: a strange thing, for Mowbray, who was no longer a boy, and had never been an enthusiast, was about the last man to fall in love on the instant. Still, he did it. Ines Kempthorne took him by storm. Only seventeen, she was already a woman; her black eyes had passionate significance,

her breast a glorious curve. Hers was a full strong nature, inherited from her Andaluçian mother. She saw in Mowbray a nature as strong as her own, though of a wholly different type. She announced to her father that she should marry Mowbray, long before Mowbray had entertained any idea on the subject. Lionel Kempthorne acquiesced. Her mother had similarly married him, and he was quite prepared for his daughter doing likewise.

He leaned back in his easy-chair and said,

"Do as you please, Ines, my child. But make me a cigarette."

She made him a cigarette, with a skill only attainable by long slender Spanish fingers; and he smoked it; and the thing was settled.

Ethel Evelyn Mowbray, who was this lady's sole child, was singularly like her mother in many points. One characteristic

however she had, which she certainly did not inherit from Ines Kempthorne: it must have come from some older ancestress. The little girl had a simply diabolic temper. To her father she never showed it, for she loved him passionately: hence, when complaint reached him on the subject, he suspected exaggeration. But the child was really a regular little fiend when thwarted by persons for whom she had no liking. Her father merely petted her: nobody had any authority over her: and so her temper became a torture to herself, and a terror to those who had to serve her.

Mr. Mowbray, having bought the Lindesay estate, had two ends in view. One was the glorification of himself as the model Manchester millionaire. The City of Cotton knew him well. There was no shrewder man on the Exchange, nor any pleasanter comrade at the Queen's. But it would be a

fine thing to show his old associates that he could also play the country gentleman on a grand scale. So he bought this great estate, and built this magnificent mansion, and brought down all his friends and acquaintances to see him. And Manchester echoed with the renown of Mowbray Mansion.

"Been down to Mowbray's?"

"No: going when the pheasant shooting begins."

"Stunning place, I can tell you. Gas made on the premises, and burning in every room in the house. Hot baths and mulled claret at any hour of the night."

"Very much like a Yankee hotel."

"Well, rather—only there's no bill to pay at the end. But Mowbray's a good fellow."

"Devilish good fellow, I think. That little witch of a daughter of his will be a fine speculation for somebody, by-and-by."

"O, he'll marry again, you may bet. He's young, and full of life. He *must* have a wife to show off that big place."

"He'll want an Earl's daughter, at least."

"He hates the aristocracy."

"Ah, then he's sure to get a wife out of the peerage. That's a safe prophecy. What odds will you give me about it?"

Thus did Edward Mowbray's Manchester acquaintance canvass his affairs. There was some truth in what these gentlemen said. Extremes meet. Love and hate are closely connected. Mowbray detested the aristocracy, with a detestation which might have moved the envy of the member for Birmingham: for all that, I think that if he could have married a Countess in her own right he would have lived happily ever after.

But I must not forget Mowbray's second idea: it was the mortification of a Marquis. He knew nothing of Lord Wraysbury, good

or bad; but he had heard that the Marquis particularly desired this Lindesay estate, and it was a great delight to thwart him. And then he would build a house on the opposite side of the river Ashe, which should make Ashridge Manor look small. And he would even have a new inn of his own in Ashridge village—with Bass's ale and billiards, and every modern improvement. At the Waynflete Arms they had never got beyond bagatelle—and the colossal landlord brewed his own beer.

These things, we have seen, he gradually effected. But a feeling of dissatisfaction had grown up in his mind, ever since his interview with Lord Waynflete. That young nobleman had taken matters so very easily. He had seemed rather pleased than otherwise at this invasion of the neighbourhood. Mr. Mowbray intended nothing of that kind. He wanted to be a thorn in aristocratic flesh:

but the flesh in question seemed rather tickled than troubled by his advent. There is no greater nuisance than to find you amuse a man when you want to annoy him: just try the effect of laughing at a persistent organ-grinder.

Mowbray's interview with Adrian made him very unhappy. He had some insight into character, and recognized in the young Earl a man not easily put out of temper, but certain to be a dangerous antagonist when once roused. Mowbray did not wish to settle down amicably at Ashridge. He wanted to worry the aristocrats. Lord Waynflete looked like a man who was not to be worried in a hurry, and not to be worried too much with impunity. Mowbray became more spiteful than ever after his interview with Adrian, and determined to do all that he possibly could to annoy his inoffensive neighbours. Building the Mow-

bray Hotel was one of his extravagances in this direction.

The long absence of the family in London had been unfortunate for Mr. Mowbray. You can't annoy an absentee. Meanwhile, he thought he would annoy other people. He exercised his manorial right over Ashridge Common: but he did not do it as Lord Wraysbury would have done. He set up notices against trespass and depredation, and called in the county police to keep watch. Old women who had picked up dry sticks on that heath for the last half century, were brought before the magistrates for such robberies, and fined with alternative of imprisonment. Horses and cattle and donkeys were driven into pound. Things were carried out so stringently, that the wit of the village wanted to know why larks were allowed to sing above the common.

Soon, of course, Mr. Mowbray was in

collision with the gipsies. He would have no vagrants on the heath. They came, notwithstanding. His keepers had to turn them out, and there was some pretty rough fighting. The gipsies, on the whole, got rather the best of it. But Mowbray was determined; he put on more men; and the Romany Chals were obliged to accept defeat for the present. Not, however, without plans for the future, as we have heard from Black Jack Johnson.

While Mr. Mowbray was thus at war with others, he was much troubled with rebellion at home. Miss Ethel Evelyn Mowbray was giving a great deal of trouble, for a child so young. You see, she was brought up as a kind of fairy princess. Life was to be made easy for her. Every fancy that she entertained was to be flattered and fulfilled. But character is very often too strong for circumstances, and the marvellous hot temper

which was born with her spoilt her own enjoyment of life, and made her a perfect nuisance to the people who had to wait upon her. They dared not complain to Mr. Mowbray; and so servant after servant grew tired and went away, and there was perpetual discord in the household.

Mr. Mowbray was an inaccessible man, so that none of his people ventured to say a word to him on the subject. There are various ways of treating dependents. Some people think it a fine thing to keep them at a considerable distance, exacting from them all manner of formal exhibitions of respect. Others treat them as if they were human beings, their own equals in all the great essentials of humanity. I have not found that these last are served less faithfully, or treated with less courtesy. But the *novi homines* are too apt to behave in the former style: recently emancipated from servitude them-

selves, they play the master somewhat too tyrannously.

In due course of time, however, Mr. Mowbray began to have a glimpse of what was the matter. He could not readily decide on the best thing to be done. There was an ancient lady, a Miss Priscilla Cust, who claimed cousinship with his wife in some way, and who had made him aware that she would be very happy to come and take charge of his establishment. But she was a mild old person, with vague blue eyes, which precisely indicated the vagueness of her character: and he was quite certain that she would not do as manager of his wilful child.

"I see what I must do," he said one evening to himself, as he smoked a solitary cigar in his dressing-room; "I must get a governess for Ethel. But I suppose it won't do to have a governess without some nominal female head to the establishment: so I may

as well let poor old Priscilla have her way, and take her in for life. She's an inoffensive creature, and very good-tempered. Yes, that's what I'll do."

Having decided thereon, he acted with his customary promptitude. He delighted the heart of Miss Cust with an immediate invitation. When she came, he took her into counsel about a governess: and she, having an acquaintance in the scholastic profession, soon managed to procure what he wanted. And so the machinery was set going for the proper subjugation of the young heiress and tigress, Ethel Evelyn Mowbray.

CHAPTER IV.

MISS PINNOCK.

IN a certain suburb of London there stands a vast Grecian edifice, with lawns and gardens around it, and tall iron railings defending it from the outside public. Well kept are those lawns—gorgeous with the best flowers of every season are the beds and borders. The casual passenger who, outside an omnibus, passes through that retreat of semi-genteel cockneyism, usually asks the driver what building that is. What indeed is it? Not a gaol or a workhouse—the gardens are too trim. Not a lunatic asylum—else you would see a few

happy lunatics taking the air and building castles therein. No : it is an orphan school : and inside those imposing walls there are a couple of hundred little boys and girls who have known no father except that same magnificent edifice. And, if they have known a mother, so seldom do they see her that she seems a stranger.

In this school, whose whereabout I will not too minutely indicate, little Amy Gray had received her education. When first she became its inmate, she was seven years old. She found herself among a herd of other children, a mere unit, nothing more. They slept in a vast dormitory ; they were rung up, summer and winter, at six in the morning ; they had to wash in troops, in a comfortless lavatory ; they were fed like inferior animals ; they were taught carelessly and neglected cruelly. It was no fault of the directors of that institution if

the poor children escaped being brutalized. This little Amy, whose father had been a poor gentleman, with a remarkable capacity for failure in all he undertook, was very miserable for a long time. Happily, human nature is far stronger than inhuman tyranny. The child throve, and so did many of her schoolfellows, notwithstanding the stupid repression to which they were subjected. Imagine the hideous monotony of dull unintelligent lessons from year to year! Imagine the entire absence of holidays! Visits of friends were allowed for brief times at remote intervals: but poor Amy had no friends. The life of these children was passed between school-room, bed-room and playground—this last an ugly irregular quadrangle, with a few stunted trees along the high outer wall, and with a line of long flat windows overlooking it. Do not suppose that those emerald lawns and vivid par-

terres were intended for the young eyes of these hapless orphans. No: they were simply an advertisement of the splendour of the place: the committee were wont to lounge there, after the fatigue of inspection, followed by an early dinner. Those rotund white-waistcoated fathers of the City would spend a quiet hour there after their port wine, and smoke a mild cigar, and congratulate themselves on their goodness to fatherless children. But the eager eyes of the boys and girls never enjoyed those pleasant gardens. They did not pass the lofty walls even for religious worship; there was a chapel, and there was a chaplain, and every Sunday brought with it the Church Catechism—not to mention the necessity of learning by rote, collect, epistle, and gospel. Sunday was the weariest day of the week: quite as much to learn, and laughter forbidden.

I think it must be admitted that Amy Gray, in this prison house, was a spoilt child in the strongest sense of the words. She saw nothing of the fragrance of flowers, heard nothing of the music of birds. But childhood has its compensations, and God is too strong for City men and school-keepers. Here were a lot of little girls thrown together, and love and mirth awoke among them; and they formed a little world of their own, full of beauty and magic and mystery. True, some of them died: but what is an orphan more or less? So the world might say: I merely say that the orphan is fortunate who goes straight to the loving embrace of the Father of orphans. Some of them died: for there were rooms ill-ventilated, there was food plentiful but ill-chosen, there was none of the tender nurture which young children need.

Amy Gray did not die, though she was a

very fragile little creature to look at. She was of dainty and delicate mould. Her hair was a light soft brown, her eyes a watchet blue, her temperament strangely quick, sensitive, apprehensive, forgetive. [N.B.—That last epithet is of Shakespeare's coinage, and deserves to be kept in use.] But, after some years of bullying by big girls—a process whose cruelty cannot be comprehended unless one has been a little girl and suffered it—Amy gradually became a "big girl" herself, and moreover took an important position among her peers. The child happened to have a conscience. These are days in which people are apt to forget that intellect is one thing and conscience another; that intellect is often swayed by fallacies and plausibilities; while conscience, being an intuition, cannot be so swayed. Men feel what in old English was called the ayenbite of inwyt, and wonder what

it means. They have been too clever for some rival or opponent; they have "done" him—and done him fairly, since he would gladly have done them in the same manner; but, when they are in a meditative mood, alone, at midnight, they feel an unpleasant sensation—something like a nasty taste in the mouth. Well, that's conscience. They get rid of it with masterly rapidity; and it soon dies out, and is forgotten. And so railway and insurance and discount companies flourish and are famous.

Thanks rather to her conscience than to any other ingredient in her character, Amy Gray held quite a leading position among her schoolfellows when there happened a revolution. The Lady Principal of the establishment died—it was currently reported, of overeating herself—and the governors, after long and deliberate reflexion, appointed as

her successor a Miss Pinnock, who was only about five-and-twenty, and who had herself been educated in this very place. That she was an "old orphan"—if one may use such a phrase concerning a rather pretty girl of her age—was a great recommendation: so she was unanimously elected, and duly installed.

Now the fact is, that Angelina Pinnock was a young person who could form a definite idea—and, which is better, could carry it out. There are people who to this day believe that America was created to gratify Columbus. I don't know about that; but I do know that if any human mind devotes itself to a single strenuous effort for any given purpose, that effort generally succeeds. When Miss Pinnock left this Orphan School, after many years of bad teaching and misery, she took with her a fixed resolve to return some day as its mistress, and to reform it altogether. Her vow had its fulfilment. She

did return as its mistress, and began at once to change the aspect of the place.

She could teach pleasantly, and did so. She could be kind and yet strict, and she united those qualities. She improved the ventilation of the rooms, varied the food of the children, let them out of that cheerless trapezoid of playground in which previously they had been confined. There were members of the committee who had always entertained an interest in the school: she made that interest more direct and immediate. Of course it took different forms; one old gentleman showed it in the form of strawberries and cream; another, of lessons in botany. Truly, under her influence, the place was as much changed as the palace of the Sleeping Beauty, when the destined Prince kissed her lips, and all the world awoke.

Miss Pinnock was by no means a perfect

woman. She had formed herself on Dr. Arnold, who was her fair ideal, and she wanted to make this Orphan School a petticoated Rugby. She went in for omniscience, herself: she had taught herself everything, and was as learned as Byron's Donna Inez. Latin she had learnt at school. Subsequently she had become, as she considered, a perfect Greek scholar, being quite able to translate the New Testament into the phraseology of the authorized version. There were mystic rumours of her recondite knowledge of Hebrew and Sanscrit. As to mathematics, she was equal to any senior wrangler, having mastered Colenso's Arithmetic, and the first part of that episcopal ready-reckoner's *Algebra*. I firmly believe that she had some faint notion of the meaning of the Binomial Theorem—that "beautiful child of Newton's Youth," as the poetic Professor Sylvester called it.

Surely a lady with such accomplishments as these may be forgiven for being a little conceited about them. Miss Pinnock was, it is certain. I think, however, that she had a better right to feel some self-satisfaction in reference to her reforms at the Orphan School. She brought air and light and freedom into that dull place. There was a perfect metamorphosis. The stolid old gentlemen from the City, who muddled their heads with Consols in the morning and Sandeman at night, were amazed at the change. Two or three of them, bachelors and widowers—it is astonishing how many of both classes there are in the City—absolutely fell in love with Miss Pinnock. But the resolute Angelina angelically pursued the even tenor of her way, and impartially distributed her smiles among her elderly admirers.

Meanwhile, she was doing infinite good

among the children under her care. Our little friend Amy Gray was one of the first to profit by it. After years of such suffering as girlhood never should know, she had reached the summit of the school, and was in a position to tyrannize over others. She had never done so. Her young heart yearned for loving guidance, and from Miss Pinnock she obtained it. There was a definite distinction between the mistress and pupil. Amy Gray was pure gold: Angelina Pinnock, at the very best, was only silver-gilt. But Amy at this period firmly believed in Miss Pinnock; worshipped her indeed; thought her wiser and cleverer than she even ventured to think herself. There were about ten years between the ages of these two young people.

Now it was a rule of the establishment over which Miss Pinnock presided that a certain number of the girls were to go out

as governesses—and this was to be Amy Gray's happy destiny. What else indeed could the poor child do? There is no marriage market in this United Kingdom: otherwise might she, on her intrinsic merits, have found a master at once. For she was a very nice girl when she emerged from the Orphan School into a world of which she knew nothing; a pretty quiet shy quick child, without a single vice—unless ignorance be a vice. And even her ignorance had recently been modified, for Miss Pinnock had lent her the works of one William Shakespeare. She intuitively recognised his women, and so began to see that there must be truth in his men. *Men!* Imagine what an imaginative child of eighteen, shut up all her life in an Orphan School, must think and dream concerning that utterly unknown half of the world. *Men!* Yes, there they were, on that glorious canvas, painted by the

world's Master Poet. Yes: she saw herself in Miranda: was there any Ferdinand? She would like to be Rosalind; but ah! she had never seen the deer bound gaily through the long dim glades of Arden's forest. Shakespeare was the world to her; she read his profound pages just when she needed a key to the world.

I think there ought to be numerous copies of Shakespeare in all orphan schools for girls. Boys can do with Euclid and Virgil.

Angelina Pinnock, as I have remarked, had formed herself upon Dr. Arnold. She had even adopted his politics. What in the world she wanted with politics may well be asked: but Miss Pinnock wasn't going to be behind the opposite sex in anything, so she set up decided political and theological opinions. She was a Liberal—quite an advanced Liberal, indeed.

This circumstance had an effect upon the

destiny of Amy Gray. The time had come for her to leave the place, and go out as a governess. The school supplied governesses of the first quality, so far as the pretence to teach everything goes; and the best people were in the habit of applying to the Lady Principal. When Amy had to leave, there were two excellent situations to choose from. Miss Pinnock had her favourite pupil to lunch with her in her own private room, and talked over the matter.

"There are two very good situations, Amy," she said, "and I hardly know which to recommend. In each case there is one little girl to look after, in her ninth year. One is the daughter of the Marquis of Wraysbury, and the salary offered is fifty pounds a year."

"Where do they live?" asked Amy.

"At Ashridge Manor, in one of the midland counties."

"I think I should like that," said Amy. "People of good family are always pleasant to deal with, I have heard."

"That is not invariably true," said Miss Pinnock. "They are generally very haughty, and treat their governesses as if they were servants. I think, for every reason, the other is best."

"What is the other?" inquired Amy.

"It comes from the same neighbourhood, which is rather curious. Mr. Mowbray, of Mowbray Mansion, wants a governess for his daughter. He offers a hundred a year."

There was a pause. After a while Amy said:

"Really, Miss Pinnock, I think I would rather go to Lord Wraysbury's."

Miss Pinnock felt angry. She was an advanced Liberal, you know, and had a strong objection to peers of the realm.

"You foolish girl," she said, "you are led

away by a title. Would you give up fifty pounds a year just for the sake of having a Marquis for your master? I never heard of such a thing. Mr. Mowbray, I know, is one of the richest men in the north of England, and he offers you twice as much money as Lord Wraysbury. Surely you won't hesitate in your choice."

Amy Gray did hesitate; but she could not set herself against the declared opinion of her mistress. She was perfectly ignorant of the state of the world outside the walls in which she had spent her life since mere babyhood. She had a very vague idea of the meaning of a Marquis; but she instinctively felt that the fifty pounds a year was a better offer than the hundred.

However, her fate was sealed. Miss Pinnock was averse from Marquises, and Amy thought herself bound to do whatever Miss Pinnock told her. That unquestioning obedi-

ence of girls to their female seniors is an uncommonly curious phenomenon. They don't obey the opposite sex with anything like similar alacrity.

So Amy Gray became tutress to Mowbray's unmanageable daughter, Ethel Evelyn. Great festival was held in honour of her departure from the Orphan School. She was the pet pupil, you see, and the mistress's crony; and several well-built girls aspired to fill the situation which she vacated; and so there was much rejoicing over her exit. She was going to be a governess with a hundred a year, which seemed a prodigious promotion to those children who were as yet her equals. But I don't think she was very enthusiastic about it, poor child.

However, she had to go forth into a world which was completely unknown to her. Miss Pinnock took her to town, in-

structed her in her route, placed her safely in a first-class carriage of the Great Northern Railway. Amy had never travelled by rail in her life: the whole thing amazed her. But she knew she had to dree her weird, and so took matters as quietly as possible. She had about ninety miles to travel by rail, and then Mr. Mowbray's carriage would meet her at Rothcastle station. All these things she had learnt by heart: and, although railway travelling was an entire novelty to her, she had made up her mind to take it as coolly as if she were the inventress of railways.

Miss Pinnock had got her into a carriage by herself, and was kindly requesting an amiable guard (who was not above the receipt of a shilling) to take the greatest possible care of her. She was going to Mr. Mowbray's, and a carriage was to meet her at Rothcastle. As she was audibly deliver-

ing these instructions, another guard came up the platform, followed by a tall man, and coolly opened the carriage door, saying,

"Room here, my lord."

Adrian, Lord Waynflete, quietly took his place opposite the little governess. Miss Pinnock was taken aback: but the bell rang at that moment, and there was a cry of

"Take your seats, please!"

"Good-bye, dearest: write to me directly." . . . You know the sort of thing. The train goes out of the station with the steady swiftness of fate—and it is quite possible that those two dreadfully affectionate people never meet again. Perhaps they don't want to.

Lord Waynflete was not at all the sort of man to sit opposite a pretty girl for a hundred miles without talking to her. His first move was simple enough. Would she like to look at *Punch*?

She had positively never seen a copy of *Punch* in her life. She accepted his offer; looked through letterpress and engraving; laughed merrily; for her spirits rose with the adventure, and then told him so.

"Why, where *can* you have lived, never to see *Punch?* It is quite a miracle."

She explained. She had not been out in the world as yet, and saw no disgrace in being an orphan, educated by charity.

"Well," said Lord Waynflete, "that accounts for it. Why, what a multitude of things you will have to find out! It is almost worth while to be shut up in one's youth, to come out into a new world, as you do."

"It has been very pleasant as yet," she said, simply. She was quite amazed and delighted with this noble specimen of manhood, who treated her as if she had been his sister.

"And where are you going?" he asked.

"To Rothcastle Station. This is the first railway journey I have ever had. It is very nice."

"Very nice the first time," said Adrian. "So you are going to Rothcastle. That's my station, too. Are you going to stay in the neighbourhood?"

"I am going to Mr. Mowbray's as governess to his little girl."

"Ah! Mr. Mowbray has a very fine place down there. I hope you will be comfortable with him. I believe he is a very good fellow. But do you think you shall like being a governess?"

"I don't know what I shall like. I have been shut up between brick walls all my life——"

"Which is not a very long one," interrupted Adrian.

"It has seemed long," she said. "How-

ever, I have been shut up, like a bird in a cage; and I have no idea what the world is like; and I feel rather frightened."

"I hope I don't frighten you," he said.

"Not at all. You have taken away some of my terror. I feel as if I had met a friend. If everybody is like you, the world will not be so very dreadful. But I am afraid I talk too freely."

"You talk in the true way," said Adrian. "Now let me talk freely to you. This Mr. Mowbray is, I believe, an uncommonly good fellow; but he is prejudiced: and he hates my family extremely. It is political hatred. You don't know the difference between a Whig and a Tory, of course?"

"No, indeed!"

"How should you? They are names for follies. But they exist, and give some trouble. Mr. Mowbray detests me, because I don't think as he does."

"And do you detest him for the same reason?"

"Not in the least. I like what I have seen of him. He is a very good fellow, but does not carry out his ideas in exactly the right way."

"And are we near each other?" she asked.

"Very near. He has just built an immense place just opposite ours. We are on the top of a hill; there is a river below, and a small village beyond: and then on the other side is his new house. I shall be sure to see you again."

There was silence for some time after this. Amy studied *Punch*, and Adrian watched her covertly, thinking what a little innocent frank creature she was.

Suddenly she said,

"I wish you would tell me your name."

"I am Adrian, Lord Waynflete," he said, with a smile.

"Ah, that was not the name. No, it was Wraysbury."

"That's my father's name," he said. "You don't understand these trifles. What about it?"

"Only that I was offered to be governess at Lord Wraysbury's, and they made me take this other. Do you know, I'm very sorry?"

"Are you?" he said. "Well, so am I. But if you get tired of Mr. Mowbray, you can cross the river, you know, and come and take charge of my little sister. She's such a good little child."

"O, but she will have another governess. Well, Lord Waynflete, I *am* sorry. They made me take it, because . . . O, I can't tell you."

At this moment the train stopped at Roth-

castle. Lord Waynflete, much amused with his innocent little fellow-traveller, got out, and handed her out. A footman was waiting.

"Go," he said, "and see if there is a carriage from Mr. Mowbray's for this lady."

The servant returned in a few minutes. There was no carriage from Mr. Mowbray's.

"They have forgotten you," said Adrian. "Never mind. There is a carriage of mine here, fortunately—I will send you in that."

"No, no," she said. "I feel sure you are inconveniencing yourself. Let me hire a carriage, or something. I don't understand those things, you know."

"Of course not," said Lord Waynflete; "but I do. My horses will take you to Mr. Mowbray's in twenty minutes. Come: I assure you there is no other way."

And he handed her to the door of the omnibus.

"But how will you get home?"

"They will come back for me in about half an hour. Meanwhile, I shall smoke a cigar, if you know what that means. Good-bye. We shall meet again."

Thus it happened that the Merchant's governess drove up to his door in the carriage of the Marquis.

Waynflete meanwhile took a cigar from his case, sat down by a blazing fire in the waiting-room, and reflected on the marvellous little innocent ignorant creature he had met that day.

"She's a study in character," he said to himself. "But for an accident, she'd have come to educate little Mary. I wish she had. Never mind, she won't stay at that cad Mowbray's; and I shall tell mamma my adventure, and ask her not to engage a governess till this child is ready. She is a very curious little party, that's a fact. What

in the world is it she reminds me of? Some flower, I think. O, I know, a primrose."

"Carriage is waiting, your lordship."

The servants were not at all pleased at having had to take a lady to Mowbray Mansion.

CHAPTER V.

THE GOVERNESS ARRIVES.

ADRIAN got home to Ashridge Manor half an hour before dinner time. He had just run up to town for a few hours' change and refreshment: father and son had rooms in the Albany, which they used for brief visits to London. Even Lord Waynflete, who loved the country with a hearty affection, found it now and then necessary to go up and dine with a friend, or hear a new *prima donna*. On this occasion he had found some slight excuse for a night in town, and had enjoyed the time in his own quiet fashion, but was extremely

glad to get back again. There are some men who cannot breathe freely except in pure air, and Waynflete was one.

Miss Lechmere and Harry Fane were still at the Manor—indeed I think it was to get beyond reach of Miss Lechmere for a few hours that he had gone to London. He was very tired of this young lady, who was pertinaciously agreeable to him. She was in too grand and lofty a style to suit Adrian. The simple frank little governess whom he had so curiously encountered was far more to his taste. Moreover, Miss Lechmere treated him with an air of patronizing affection which amazed while it amused him. Her manner seemed to imply—"I am much too good for any man, but I might possibly be induced to tolerate this young Marquis." I don't know that Adrian suspected Lily of designing to marry him, for never was there a man more unsuspicious.

But he could see that Miss Lechmere had an objectionable influence over the Marchioness. There is a dramatic poem of Charles Lamb's based on the influence exerted by one woman over another—the said influence having been gained in their school-days; but such cases are probably rare, for when a girl enters the world, and especially when she marries, the feelings of her days of pupilage generally seem to her childish and absurd. Miss Lechmere, however, had contrived to retain her influence over Lady Wraysbury, whose feeling towards her was evidently a mixture of liking and fear. Adrian scrutinized this curious relation with an inquiring eye; and wished, both for his stepmother's sake and his own, that Miss Lechmere would terminate her visit.

Dinner was at eight. Little Lady Mary was in bed by this time, happily asleep. There was no one at table except the party

at the house. Fane did not come down till the soup had been removed. Until his arrival, scarcely anything had been said.

"Will you have some soup, Mr. Fane?" asked the Marchioness.

"Thank you, no. Will you accept my apology again? Really I am ashamed of this incurable unpunctuality. Do you know, I once had to call on the Duke of Wellington on important business. He appointed eight o'clock in the morning—positively, in the morning. That was a command, of course. But how was I to do it? I had not been up at that barbarous hour since I left Eton."

"I hope you managed to keep the appointment," said Miss Lechmere.

"O yes. I supped a little later than usual, and went to Apsley House the last thing before going to bed."

"Very ingenious," said Miss Lechmere, in her customary tone of sarcasm. "I hope

you have brought us some news from London, Lord Waynflete."

"To be sure, Adrian," said Fane. "Do you know I forgot you had gone to town. *Is* there any news?"

"Yes, a little. Charles Wells threw Lord Ensor out of the Chandos Club window the other day."

"And what did Ensor do?"

"Picked himself up, shook his fist at the window—not at Charley, you may be sure—and vowed he would never enter the vulgar place again. If he keeps his word, there will be some rejoicing."

"So I should think," said Fane, languidly searching for the choice morsels of a red mullet on his plate. "Anything else?"

"Yes, several things. Lady Adela Radford has run away with somebody, but at present it is not known who is the victim."

"Why, that's the fourth time," said Fane. "What more?"

"Rabshakeh Grimes has given up the sixty per cent business, and bought a princely estate in the West Riding."

"Sorry for that," said Fane.

"But surely," said the Marchioness, "you have brought us some news more interesting than this, Adrian?"

"I suited myself to Fane," he replied. "He cares for nothing but club gossip of the sort I have just been inventing to amuse him. There's not a word of it true, Harry, upon my honour."

Fane took a glass of Rœderer.

"And you had no adventures at all?" said Miss Lechmere.

Adrian had intended to say no word of the little governess, except to Lady Wraysbury, but this Miss Lechmere vexed him with her pertinacity, and he thought he would tell his slight story.

"Adventures are not frequent in these

days, Miss Lechmere," he said. "Still I had one."

"What was it?" she asked.

"I came down from London to Rothcastle with a very charming girl."

"You call *that* an adventure?"

"Yes. I think that to meet a charming girl is an adventure both pleasant and rare."

"Love at first sight, Adrian?" said Lord Wraysbury.

"No, sir, but the adventure was curious. The child was fresh from an orphan school, and was going as governess to Mowbray's place. I found out that she was the very same girl that was mentioned to you, mamma, as a governess for Pet."

Lady Mary's familiar name was at this moment Pet. But Adrian, a great coiner of names and phrases, generally gave her a new name about once a month.

"That is singular," said the Marchioness.

"I wonder why she preferred Mr. Mowbray?"

"Easily guessed," said Lord Wraysbury. "He probably offered the higher salary. What did you propose, Alice?"

"Fifty pounds," said the Marchioness.

"Fifty! Depend on it Mowbray would not condescend to pay less than a hundred."

"You're right, sir," said his son. "The girl, who is as simple as if she were no older than Pet, was about to tell me why she was ordered to go to Mowbray's, and suddenly stopped short. That is it, no doubt."

"Did you like her, Adrian?" asked Lady Wraysbury.

"Yes, I certainly *did* like her, though whether she would make a good governess or not I cannot conjecture. But she is the most perfectly simple little girl I ever met; she is absolutely ignorant of the world; she has positively been kept within the high

walls of a London orphan school ever since she was seven years old."

"You must have found her dreadfully stupid," said Miss Lechmere.

"Not in the least. Her perfect ignorance was accompanied by a quick intelligence. But I can't help speculating on her first introduction to the world. How will she get on, I wonder? I wish she had come here, mamma. It would have been quite an interesting psychological study."

"Long word, Adrian," said Fane. "Might as well say flirtation. It's easier to understand."

"Really," remarked Miss Lechmere, "that interesting orphan seems quite to have fascinated you, Lord Waynflete. I think her not coming here has been quite a fortunate escape. I can't understand your caring so much for a young person from a charity school."

Adrian did not reply, and Lady Wraysbury rose. When the ladies were gone, a last bottle of Château Lafitte, of the comet year, drew the gentlemen closer together.

"That Miss Lechmere wants to marry you, Adrian," said Fane. "Egad, this is noble claret, my lord."

"It's a tolerable wine," quoth the Marquis. "I like it. Bad claret is an utter abomination, but the very best claret is the wine of wines. Burgundy has nothing so bad as Bordeaux, but then it has nothing quite so good."

"Not even Rothschild's 'old Clo,' that Thackeray joked about," said Fane. "But, Adrian, my dear fellow, 'ware hawk. The Lechmere is dangerous."

"She *does* seem rather fond of you," says the Marquis, laughing.

"I don't return it," says his son. "I've an intuitive dislike for that young woman,

on the Dr. Fell principle. She's handsome, and dresses well, and talks well, and has plenty of money; but I cannot help feeling an antipathy towards her."

"After which," said the Marquis, "suppose we go to the ladies."

Lord Waynflete, at a convenient time next morning, when the stately Miss Lechmere was supposed to be immersed in her studies—I believe she was quietly improving the colour of her eyebrows and lips—had a talk about his adventure with the governess to Lady Wraysbury and his little sister.

"The poor child will never stay at Mowbray's," he said. "It is the talk of the village that Mowbray's daughter is a regular little fiend in temper. Besides, this girl has never known the world, and her straightforward ways will shock a cad like Mowbray. Did I tell you that they had not sent to meet her, and that I had her

taken to Mowbray's in our omnibus?"

"No; you did not tell me that last night."

"I forgot. I wish I had—it would have made your friend, Miss Lechmere, so angry. That young person thinks that people with less than ten thousand a year have no right to exist."

"You don't like Miss Lechmere," said the Marchioness.

"I don't think you're enthusiastically fond of her," said Adrian, with a laugh. "I wish she'd cross the river, and marry Mowbray."

I wonder whether Lily Lechmere heard these words? Her hand must have been on the door: she entered even as they were uttered. Lord Waynflete retreated, saying,

"Good-bye, mamma. I am going down to the decoys to look for wild-fowl."

Dinner was at eight at Mowbray Mansion also on the night of Miss Gray's arrival. Mr. Mowbray was away from home, which

accounted for no carriage having been sent to meet the governess. Under his eye everything was punctual and regular; but his servants did not practise absolute fidelity in his absence. When Amy Gray reached the great house in Lord Wraysbury's carriage, there was a considerable amount of surprise and bewilderment; but in due time her arrival was understood, and she was shown into the private apartment of Miss Priscilla Cust.

"Dear, dear," said that old lady, when she understood who Amy was—"how glad I am to see you!"

Which was strictly true; for, during Miss Cust's short residence at Mowbray Mansion, her life had been rendered perfectly miserable by the vagaries of Ethel Evelyn. That wicked young witch beheld in the vague irresolute old lady an easy victim: and the tricks she played upon her were so numer-

ous and daring that Miss Cust began to wish she had never left her humble cottage. And yet she liked good living and general comfort; and her spacious bed-room, with a glorious fire on winter nights, and the plenteous dinners and generous wines of Mowbray Mansion, contrasted pleasantly with her damp little chamber at the cottage, and the boiled neck of mutton with turnips which was her favourite festival at home. Well, there was a governess coming; she would wait and see.

When she saw and talked with the newcomer, she was not relieved from her fears. The gentle simple Amy looked by no means a tigress-tamer. However she hoped for the best, and received Miss Gray with the utmost kindness.

"My Cousin Mowbray is away," she said, "for two or three days. I am so sorry I forgot to send the barouche for you. He

will be quite angry. But really I have no memory now, though I used to have an excellent one when I was your age. I could remember the multiplication table and the apostles' creed quite easily. Indeed, I once learnt the third chapter of *Proverbs*, because my grandfather offered me a guinea to do it. There were good old-fashioned guineas in those days, my dear. Mustn't I have had a good memory?"

"Indeed you must," said Amy.

"But you would like to go to your room, and get ready for dinner. There is nobody but you and me. My cousin Mowbray is away—and Ethel Evelyn is gone to bed; she wasn't well this afternoon. She is rather wild, you know, and she got into the jam closet, and it gave her a stomach ache. So we shall dine quietly together, my dear."

Amy Gray was shown to her room, and prepared herself for dinner. She was rather

bewildered. Miss Cust was a charming old lady; but she saw at once that from her she would get no guidance. However, she could only hope for the best, and resolve to do the best on her own part; so, being a good little girl, she knelt down at her bedside, and prayed an earnest prayer for help, which was not ineffective. I won't discuss any theories of prayer; but the strong movement of human will is always a power in the universe.

Dinner was served for Miss Cust and Miss Gray in the little dining-room—a charming cabinet, exquisitely furnished, with priceless pictures on the walls. This was where Edward Mowbray dined when the company did not exceed four. There were two other dining-rooms—one, where from eight to twelve could be comfortably entertained—another, for great occasions, with room for a hundred and twenty.

Strangely new was all this to the little girl from the Orphan School. Every trifle perplexed her. She had a special taste for art; she had been selected as a promising pupil to proceed beyond the customary limits in drawing and painting; and the pictures sumptuously placed upon these walls were to her a vision, a revelation. There was one just opposite—a cool bend of the Thames, with a punt and some people fishing; nothing original or poetic, but the work of an artist who could put air and water on canvas. It fascinated her for the time. But she was obliged to turn her eyes to the table, and to do her best to avoid solecisms.

She succeeded very well. The grave man-servant behind her chair may have found her out, but Miss Cust did not. Only imagine however her difficulties—coming straight from her nunnery-prison to a country house, and dinner served on silver plate—a

man-servant, whose breath she could feel on her neck, which she didn't like—strange viands, of which she had no experience—"Champagne, miss?" from a butler who looked far more venerable than the chaplain of the Orphan School—*entrées* and *entremêts*, puddings and conserves—and who can be surprised if she committed solecisms? I don't say that she did, mind; but am sure that if she did she may be forgiven. And after all, the best of us are liable to err. I have seen a man eat vinegar with oysters. I have seen a man drink sherry with salmon. I have even seen a man take bread sauce with pheasant. And, being tolerant, I have forgiven them, and made no mention of their crimes.

Dinner was over. Amy was eating some green ginger under Miss Cust's direction, and marvelling whence there came such a multitude of delicious things, when the door

was suddenly flung open, and in rushed Miss Ethel Evelyn Mowbray in her night-dress.

"O!" she shrieked, in that metallic tone which invariably indicates bad temper—"so I'm sent to bed, and here's the new governess. Give me something nice, Aunt Pris—I want something very nice."

Wherewith she climbed into Miss Cust's lap, and helped herself to the nearest thing on the table which looked at all nice.

"She is rather unmanageable," said the old lady, endeavouring to smile, but producing only an agonised grin. "But she will really be a very good child—with a little training. *O Ethel!*"

These last words rose to a kind of shriek: for the amiable Miss Mowbray, while Miss Cust was talking to Amy, had taken a pin from the old lady's dress, and was sticking it savagely into her arm.

"I think you had better go to bed again, Ethel," said Miss Cust, mildly. But it was not until she was half asleep that the little animal could be got rid of.

Poor Amy Gray looked forward to her work with considerable alarm.

"She is a naughty child," said Miss Cust. "But she really has an excellent disposition, and I have no doubt you will soon bring her into order. I wish she wouldn't stick pins into me."

Wherewith the old lady rubbed her arm and looked lugubrious.

When Amy Gray awoke next morning to her work, she felt that she had heavy business before her. And very difficult business indeed she found it. This little girl whom she had to manage was perfectly unmanageable; she was as untameable as a fly; she had been spoilt all her life, and meant to go on being spoilt. Amy did not know what

to do. She asked Miss Cust, and got no reply worth having. Mr. Mowbray himself was detained in Manchester by some important business—and so this inexperienced little governess was left quite without aid or counsel.

The fact was that Ethel Evelyn Mowbray did not want a governess. She had southern blood in her, and was a precocious child, and in her ninth year was as clever as many a girl in her teens. She liked to have her own way; to get into a boat, and row down the Ashe; to ride her pet pony without a saddle; to be generally independent and unladylike. Such instincts in a little girl are healthy and natural—say what you will, I am not to be persuaded that girls should be dosed to death with Latin and mathematics. But unluckily Miss Mowbray had two characteristics which are simply abominable: she was spiteful and she was cunning.

Amy was distracted by the vagaries of her pupil. She consulted Miss Cust: but that dear old lady had been driven to *her* wit's end long ago. It wasn't a long drive, as Artemus Ward would say.

Mr. Mowbray was not expected to return for at least a week. Meanwhile, our little Amy found herself in charge of a child that was rather more like a goblin than anything else; that delighted in mischief, and was not amenable to reason. Amy tried to lecture her, kindly and pleasantly, on the folly and naughtiness of her behaviour—and the little elf laughed in her face and went off to do more mischief.

Utterly in despair, Amy sat down one evening and wrote a long letter to Miss Pinnock. She wrote it by her dressing-room fire, and occupied quite two hours in its composition. It was lucid, pathetic, eloquent. It told the whole story of Amy's

surroundings. It was a charming letter, the thorough outpouring of a young girl's difficulties and troubles. Amy wrote it at night, and then said her prayers and got into bed; and then couldn't sleep soundly, but dreamt that in some way or other Miss Pinnock had been turned into a very naughty girl, and she had to manage her; and then woke unrefreshed in the morning, and read through her letter before she dressed, and thought she had better not send it.

However, at last she determined she would send it, and it was duly posted, and reached the Orphan School. Miss Pinnock read it at breakfast, and smiled. And by the very first post she replied.

Well might she do so, since her letter did not take long to write. It contained two words only.

* * * * * * *

Those two monosyllables, seven letters in

all—and in the number seven there is mystic significance—solved the problem for Amy. She was a good girl, and did as she was told. The recipe acted like a charm. Ethel Mowbray soon found out that her governess was her best friend; she became more docile; she took to Mangnall's Questions and Mrs. Markham's Histories as if she really and truly liked them. She was quite polite to Miss Cust, and treated the servants as if they were human beings.

When Mr. Mowbray came home, which was nearly a fortnight after Miss Gray's arrival, he was simply astounded at the state of affairs. He had almost forgotten about this governess whom he had engaged. When he suddenly recollected her, he formed a picture of a tall gaunt woman, quite incapable of being mistaken for a lady. He got home just in time for luncheon, and found Miss Cust, Miss Gray, and his daugh-

ter sitting at that meal. Ethel jumped up and welcomed him in her usual impulsive manner, for she had a passionate love for her father; then she went back to her seat, and Priscilla introduced Miss Gray to him. He was quite taken aback. This shy frank beautiful creature was not at all his ideal of a governess. He anticipated something bony, angular, ill-tempered.

His surprise was heightened when he found that his daughter was tamed. The child had been a perfect nuisance to him. He had no time to bring her into order; and if he had, might not have known the way to do it. This little governess from an orphan school had got him out of his difficulty, and already achieved a marvellous metamorphosis in his child. To him it seemed miraculous.

And then, as was very natural, he looked at the little governess. Really she was a

charming little lady, and blended beauty and intelligence with an unusual felicity. Mowbray made up his mind that she was precisely the sort of person to fall in love with. He watched her quietly, and thought her perfect in everything. When a middle-aged gentleman like Mowbray falls in love, the symptoms are serious.

It must not be imagined that during this time no other eyes had regarded the little governess. Adrian Lord Waynflete, unutterably bothered by the Lechmere, several times crossed the Ashe with intent to meet his pretty fellow-traveller, if she should appear. Patience, like other virtues, is occasionally rewarded: and it so happened that Adrian met Miss Gray on the day when she had written her letter to Miss Pinnock. She was going to post it. Women have their small superstitions about such matters, and think a letter more likely to reach

its destination if they post it themselves.

On this occasion Lord Waynflete showed her the way to the post-office, and gave her certain valuable information as to the hours of posting. Big Dog was with him, and made her acquaintance at once. His first sniff seemed to give him a key to her character, and he was perfectly satisfied.

By some curious coincidence, which I confess myself unable to explain, it frequently happened thereafter that the governess, going to the post-office, or to Miss Avery's shop for some fragment of finery, found herself suddenly almost knocked down by Big Dog's romping approach, and had to shake hands with Big Dog's master. The village began to talk—Miss Avery especially. She led the choir. And one day she considered it her duty to give a lecture to Miss Amy Gray herself.

"Have you seen Lord Waynflete lately,

Miss Gray?" she asked, after selling her a scrap of lace, or some such trumpery.

"O yes, I met him just now, with Big Dog. What a beautiful dog that is!"

"Which do you admire most, the dog or the man?"

Amy Gray, having a hidden admiration for Lord Waynflete, and by no means relishing Miss Avery's comparing him to a dog, thought it best to say nothing.

"Has it ever occurred to you, Miss Gray," said the shopwoman, presently, "that you are unwise in being so often seen in the village with Lord Waynflete? People say such unkind things, you know."

"Surely, Miss Avery," said the little girl, with the swift anger of innocence, "there is no harm in my walking through this village with a gentleman whom I know. What harm *is* there? Tell me?"

The child stamped her foot so impetuously

that she almost frightened Miss Avery, whose blood did not move quite so rapidly.

"But you see," said that excellent old lady, "he is a lord, and you are only a governess. Don't you understand what I mean? If you were of equal rank it would be different."

Miss Avery talked what was a perfectly unknown language to Miss Gray, as, indeed, to all other innocent creatures. But Amy was frightened by these mysterious intimations, and so, the next time she met Lord Waynflete, she frankly told him that she thought they had better not meet again.

"Why not, Miss Gray?" he asked.

She said she had heard it was rather improper for two people of different rank to meet in such a way.

"Who in the world has been giving you lessons in etiquette?" he asked, with a laugh.

"You are not afraid to be seen in my company, are you?"

"Not at all," she replied.

"Still," he said, reluctantly, "one must, I suppose, pay homage to public opinion—even though it is the opinion of a small village where the majority of the population can neither read nor write. Well, Miss Gray, I won't come down this way quite so often when you happen to be going to the post-office. Will that do?"

"I am sure I am always glad to see you, Lord Waynflete."

"And I am always glad to see you," he rejoined. "And we'll meet again, depend upon it. At the same time, if Eliza Avery has begun to talk, other people are talking also. You can always tell in her shop which way the wind blows. So I won't subject you to annoyance, my dear Miss Gray. And

now I'll go and scold Miss Avery for chattering to you."

He turned one way, and she the other. Then he looked back, and was charmed with her dainty figure, and the easy lightness of her step; and said to himself—

"That's the girl. I might just as well have asked her to marry me."

CHAPTER VI.

THE GIPSIES ON THE COMMON.

LITTLE Amy Gray, being a very innocent simple child, had not the remotest idea that she was an object of decided interest to those two important personages, Lord Waynflete and Mr. Mowbray. Having spent her short life in a kind of scholastic prison, completely separate from the world, she was wholly ignorant of many matters which the girl of the period perfectly understands. The world was new to her in all respects. She had never tasted game, or drunk champagne, or seen a hot-house flower, or made acquaintance with horses

and dogs, till she came to Mowbray Mansion. Least of all had she seen any men. I would compare her to Miranda; but perhaps the excellent elderly managers of that Orphan School would complain that I regarded them as so many Calibans. They would doubtless be modest enough to admit that they were not precisely of the Ferdinand type.

Some of my lady readers may perhaps insinuate that Amy was not quite so innocent as she looked. What did the little minx mean by meeting Lord Waynflete so frequently in the vicinity of the village post-office? Miss Avery certainly did not give her credit for too much simplicity. "Sly girl that," she was wont to reflect, "though she looks as if butter wouldn't melt in her mouth. She thinks she's got hold of Lord Waynflete. But I guess she's making a mistake: those young noblemen are not so

easily taken in. Well, I hope no harm will come to the poor silly young thing." Thus Miss Avery would meditate, and then put on her spectacles, and set seriously to make up her accounts.

Amy of course saw that Lord Waynflete liked her company; but more than this she saw not, and her head was unvexed by any foolish visions. She was pleased to see him, certainly. To meet him in Ashridge was an agreeable variety in her life. And she was wholly amazed when Miss Avery amiably warned her that there was something wrong in such meetings. She accepted the statement without question. At the Orphan School, all sorts of things had been considered wrong. It was improper to run too fast, or to sing too loud, or to whistle, or to eat as if you were hungry, or to laugh on Sundays. Indeed so many things were improper that Amy was not at all

surprised to find an immense number of unintelligible improprieties in the outer world.

Lord Waynflete, as we have seen, had a strong feeling towards Amy, and, as he walked home after their last interview, felt half sorry that he had not told her so. At the same time, he was a little in doubt. There was a cousin, very charming, and a great heiress, whom everybody imagined he would marry eventually. It was not expected that he would marry in a hurry. His friends, who knew his temper, thought that he would take his time about it, but ultimately select the most eligible lady, a happy combination of rank, wealth, and beauty. They called him a cool hand, a devilish sensible fellow, not the man to make a mistake in marriage : the notion of his falling in love would have appeared to most of his acquaintances eminently ridiculous.

There were three people who held a different view of his character : his father (who had fallen in love once or twice himself), the Marchioness, who read his character with feminine intuition, and George Métivier, a poet, who recognised the poetic element in Adrian's composition.

Meanwhile Mr. Mowbray was looking at the little girl with appropriative eyes. Towards her employer Amy's feeling was one of profound respect; she had been trained to venerate her superiors, and to obey without question. When she had consulted Miss Pinnock in her difficulty, she was quite frightened at the thought of following the advice given; but she had never disobeyed Miss Pinnock in her life, and so she did as she was bid. Next to Miss Pinnock, who was the idol of her youth, she venerated Mr. Mowbray. He seemed to her a superior being, of more than paternal age. Oddly

enough, she had never felt at all respectful towards Adrian. He seemed her equal. They had been friends since their first meeting in the railway-carriage; she never thought about his rank and wealth. She only thought he was the handsomest and most courteous gentleman she had ever seen.

Edward Mowbray was astonished at his governess. The product of a charity school to be a lady so easy, and unconscious! Such was his thought; it might have been retorted—who was he, to set up for a gentleman? He found himself perpetually thinking of the little girl; her face, figure, air, were full of charm; she was like a statue of Nausikaa, that he had set up in an alcove in one of the great Mowbray Mansion corridors. Anybody like her he certainly had never seen: and then how completely she had tamed that wicked wilful little

daughter of his! How would she do as his wife? He thought she would suit him perfectly.

But Mrs. Grundy has much to do with the fates of men. Mowbray's Mrs. Grundy assumed the form of his Manchester friends. It was the general opinion amongst them that he would marry again. And it was assumed as a certainty, that if he did marry again, it would be some lady of noble birth and large estates.

"That's what Ned Mowbray will do, sir," Tom Stewart used to say, as he took his third bottle of Lafitte at the Queen's. "He's an out-and-out radical, you know; but he'll found a family, and his son will be a peer. Mowbray isn't the man to throw away his position."

The merchant knew that this was the general opinion about him in Manchester; that in fact Manchester looked forward to

his doing the city honour by making his way into the ranks of the aristocracy: and he felt that if he married his governess he should be disappointing those splendid expectations. It hath been said that *omne quod exit in ess* is good: still there is some difference between countess and governess, notwithstanding the similarity of termination.

But I have stopped long enough describing people's feelings. Let us go on with our tale. Rothcastle, as I have said, is a small town, whose only claim to importance is its enormous fair. Once a year it comes, in autumn, and the village for a short time has the population of a city. Rothcastle is really a poor sort of village, situate where several muddy roads converge. The mud at Rothcastle is an institution: there is no hard stone nearer than Mount Sorel, so they macadamize with something almost as soft as loaf sugar. When the road is out of

repair, you may sink in the mud to your waist; if the stone is just put down, you will not go much higher than your knees. It is a most lonely and forlorn and dreary village at ordinary times: but when the fair comes it is pretty lively.

Vast flocks of sheep are driven in, and penned with hurdles. Mighty herds of cattle arrive, and long springs of horses. Buyers of many classes throng to the fair; farmers and cattle-dealers are numerous; and the London livery stables all send agents to a fair where a horse saleable at three hundred guineas may sometimes be picked up for thirty. Pickpockets and swindlers and card-sharpers come down in force, as may be expected; and of course detectives come also. It is a singular rustic carnival, this fair, whose origin lies in remote antiquity. It is mentioned, I think, in Edward the Confessor's reign.

One tribe of folk who never fail to put in an appearance are the gipsies. What is Lavengro about that he tells us no more of that strange people? Whence came they? That is a difficult question; but there is one quite as difficult: whence *come* they? How is it that on a Derby Day the hill at Epsom is thronged with them, so that you are surprised at there being such a multitude in the land? Whence come they, those innumerable old crones who gibber and scream, and hold up broken glasses and cups for the remainder of your champagne?

Well, we have already seen that it had been the custom of the gipsies to camp on Ashridge Common on their way to Rothcastle Fair. Hereunto Mr. Mowbray strongly objected; and, when the fair time approached, he gave orders to his keepers to concentrate themselves on the common, and to expel all trespassers.

The time came. It was two days before the fair. A pleasant October day, with a constant struggle between the sunshine and the mist; all the foliage turning marvellous colours; the little river Ashe brimful of water. Altogether a delightful day—it drew Lord Waynflete out immediately after breakfast. For some time he had not seen Métivier, so he thought he would look in upon him. When he and Big Dog got beyond the park gates it became evident that there was something unusual going on. Lord Waynflete knew Rothcastle Fair; he generally rode over to see it in progress. He liked to study the faces of men; especially when many classes of men are brought together under the pressure of excitement. And, when he passed the gates, and saw some gipsy vans on the road, he was reminded of the coming event. He walked across to the Waynflete Arms, and while so

doing was surprised at the great number of gipsy vans and carts that there were on the road. In front and behind, as far as he could see, the procession appeared continuous.

Burton was sitting on a bench outside his door, with eyes wide open, wondering at the cavalcade. You wouldn't have thought there were so many gipsies in England. Van after van filled with women and children; girls riding on donkeys; gaunt men striding along, with cunning lurchers at their heels. This was the sort of thing, and there really seemed no end to it.

"What's the meaning of this?" said Lord Waynflete to Burton.

"Good morning, my lord," says the colossal innkeeper. "They've been on the road ever since four this morning, and when there's any end coming to them I'm sure I don't know."

"But why are they so much more numerous than usual? I had no idea there were so many gipsies in the world."

"It's all about the right to the Common, my lord. You know what Black Jack Johnson said. Well, he's to be here; and he's brought together all the force of the gipsies; and they mean to see if the Squire can turn them out."

Adrian thought he would go and see the fun, so he strode along the village street, and made his way to the Common. There was an encampment, sure enough. Already the wide expanse was so covered with gipsy vans that it seemed as if no room could be found for any others. Still, on they came, an interminable procession, and defiled upon the heath, and took up such positions as as they could get. Mr. Mowbray's little army of keepers were practically powerless; they had not come down till sunrise, when

the heath was already dotted with these vagabond vehicles; and they arrived so regularly, and poured in so continuous a stream, that Mowbray's men could really do nothing.

Mr. Mowbray, angry beyond description, had sent a messenger to the Chief Constable of the county. That gentleman arrived and surveyed the Common, by that time metamorphosed into a Bohemian city, and professed his inability to be of any use.

"What's the good of the police?" asked Mowbray, curtly.

"I could not possibly get together a sufficient force to clear this Common for several hours," said the Chief Constable, "if indeed I could do it at all without extraneous aid. Now, as they will all start for Rothcastle early to-morrow morning, it would be absurd to do anything incomplete and inefficient."

The Chief Constable was a very good officer, but rather too fond of tall talk.

"But confound it! Hughes, am I to be deprived of my manorial rights because the police are not strong enough? Am I to be defied by these audacious vagabonds? Do you consider it the duty of a Chief Constable to sit quietly on horseback and see the law broken, and make no attempt to prevent it or to punish it? I'm not at all of that opinion."

"Nor am I," said Mr. Hughes. "But you must see, Mr. Mowbray, the absolute impossibility of clearing this Common. The people will go off in the course of the night. Just now they are coming on as fast as possible, and there seems no end to them."

"And I can do nothing," said Mowbray, angrily. "It is enough to make a man swear he wont trouble himself with landed property."

The scene was at this time singularly picturesque. It had been a tranquil summer: so that now in October there was more foliage than usual upon the trees, and the hues were more vivid and various. The gorse was still yellow, and even the heather had some little purple left. Mowbray and the Chief Constable (the Squire on a magnificent roan cob) had halted their horses to look at the sight. On both sides of the road the gipsy vans and carts were numberless; the horses and donkeys were loose, grazing; the fires were burning, and the cauldrons bubbling above them. And, as they watched the scene, more and more detachments arrived, and the Common grew populous.

Mowbray bit his lip and said nothing. Indeed, there was nothing to say, and there was nothing to do. He felt that the Chief Constable was perfectly right. The gipsies would be all gone to-morrow, but they had

taken possession for the time, and there was no mode of getting rid of them.

As the Squire and his ally of the constabulary held in their horses and watched the scene, Adrian came striding along with Big Dog as his companion. Mowbray was disgusted to see him at this moment of defeat, but tried to be civil. They exchanged a few words.

"The gipsies are in great force this year, Mr. Mowbray," said Adrian. "I am afraid you will find them a nuisance."

"They *are* a nuisance," said Mowbray. "I want to get them off the Common altogether, and this is their way of revenging themselves. And the police are afraid of them. They daren't interfere."

"Is that true, Hughes?" said Lord Waynflete, laughing. "Afraid of a few gipsies? We shall positively have to call in the military."

"I don't see anything I can do, my lord, in such a case as this. Look at the thousands of them. If I was to go round from one to another, and tell them who I was, and that they must go off at once, why, they'd laugh at me."

"Very likely," quoth Adrian. "And a Chief Constable ought by no means to be laughed at. I suppose the best thing is to leave them alone, and to take better precaution next year."

"I'll take good care of that," said Mowbray. "They won't serve me this trick twice."

At this moment came Black Jack Johnson on the scene, riding a splendid brown stallion about six years old, and followed by several long strings of horses, collected for Rothcastle Fair. Black Jack was pleased with his triumph, and had probably been drinking his favourite gin and ale in honour of

it. When he reached the group he exclaimed,

"Well, Squire, who's lord of the manor to-day, you or me?"

"Don't be impudent, Johnson," said Lord Waynflete, who knew the man. "You know you are doing what's against the law. The best thing you can do is to take your people off the Common as soon as possible."

"All right, my lord," he replied, and rode on at once.

Adrian took leave of Mowbray, and went on towards the abode of the Hermit.

"That gipsy fellow was very civil to Lord Waynflete," said Mowbray to the constable.

"Everybody likes Lord Waynflete," said Hughes.

"Damned if I do!" thought Mowbray.

"You see," continued the chief of police, "the Waynfletes have had these estates for many hundred years. And then they are

good to the poor, and affable" [haffable, I think he said] "to everybody. I don't think there's another gentleman in England that knows the people about him as Lord Waynflete does. He treats everybody alike."

"There must be some distinction of rank," said Mowbray, coldly.

"In course," returned the Chief Constable. "And I suppose Lord Waynflete remembers it sometimes, for I've heard people call him proud and haughty. But I never found him so."

Meanwhile, the subject of this colloquy had made his way to Métivier's. The Hut had a gate upon its lawn looking right over the Common, and there Lord Waynflete found his friend, with no hat, his long but scanty grey locks floating in the autumnal air. He was leaning on the gate and watching the gipsy encampments. It was now

sunset, and as the light decreased, the fires sparkled pleasantly in the distance.

"What do you think of this?" asked Métivier.

"I think it uncommonly picturesque," said Lord Waynflete. "Gipsies are a bad lot, no doubt, but I should not care to suppress them violently. However, Mr. Mowbray takes quite a different view of the case."

"Have you seen him?"

"Yes, he's in a very wrathful state. He's got Hughes here, the Chief Constable. Poor Hughes says he can do nothing, so Mowbray is in a terrible state of ire. And I could see he was angry with me, so I suppose he has heard that I am rather fond of gipsies than otherwise."

"I am going to wander about on the Common by-and-by with Black Jack Johnson. Stay and dine with me, and let us go

together. You'll not see so many gipsies together again, I fancy."

"I'll stay with pleasure," said Adrian. "Shall I meet Black Jack at dinner?"

"No," said Métivier. "He wouldn't come, or I'd make him welcome. But he has promised to have some cold beef and strong ale before he starts."

"If I'm to dine with you," said Lord Waynflete, "you'll have to feed Big Dog also."

"If I were quite as certain of pleasing you as I am of pleasing him, I should feel satisfied. He wants quantity: you want quality."

"And I generally get it when I come to see you. Why, 'tis worth while to visit you, for the sake of a cup of coffee."

"Ah, my coffee is good, I know. And I can give you a *chasse* this evening. My nephew, the Count, has sent me some

Kirschenwasser : very old it is, but very mellow. That will be a variety. I have no wine, as you know, but claret."

"There are few things better," said Adrian.

"Ah, you English have great wines, which you will not bring to perfection. Your cider is a wine—if it were only made carefully, it would be as good as Sauterne. Your perry, which nobody ever drinks, is as good as Moselle. But come, let us see if I can give you any dinner."

Adrian and Big Dog followed Métivier into the house, and to the room in which he lived. Books, books, books, were on shelves all around it; were piled on the floor; were thrust into the oddest corners. A very small iron bedstead stood in a recess: there Métivier slept, if sleep he ever did. But a small square table in the centre of the room had a white cloth upon it; and

the silver and glass were antique and elegant; and that last luxury of light, a magnesium lamp, stood on the table ready to be ignited.

"Why, you are a millionaire," said Adrian, when he saw it. "Do you burn magnesium? My governor can't afford it."

"I like a bright light," replied Métivier. "My eyes are not what they were. I was, in my youth, very long-sighted; could define objects at an enormous distance; but that telescopic eye-sight perishes early. Now, as night is the time I love, the time when I read much and write a little, I want light. Wherefore I extravagate in magnesium. It is not much dearer than wax candles."

The dinner was served by the deaf old lady heretofore described. It was not a bad dinner. The Ashe had yielded splendid pike: there followed a boiled neck of

mutton, with turnips: then came some woodcock and snipe. If a man can't dine satisfactorily on such materials, with an ample supply of sound claret, I think he is to be pitied. The coffee and *chasse* followed, and Lord Waynflete kudized the Kirschenwasser.

By-and-by, as they sat talking that pleasant after-dinner nonsense, half-poetical and half-philosophical, but wholly useless, which is so intensely enjoyable, came a message from Black Jack Johnson (who had finished his beef and ale), that it was time to start.

"Let us have him in and look at him first," says Adrian.

"To be sure. I wonder what he'll say to Kirschenwasser?"

"He'll want some in a 'moog.'"

Black Jack came up, looking positively shy, and standing irresolutely at the door. He was a great chief among the gipsies, the

best boxer and wrestler of his time; a fellow without fear, and with very few scruples. But he didn't half like entering this room, full of dangerous-looking books, and with a little lamp burning in it that gave a light equal almost to that of day. And he was thoroughly afraid of that grey-haired gentleman who owned the books and the lamp. Of Lord Waynflete he had no fear; him he thought he understood; he was a lord, you know, and a country gentleman, and a very good fellow, and would be kind to you if you didn't poach. But this amazing old gentleman who lived at the Hut, and never seemed to go to bed, and burned such bright lights, was a mystery and a terror to Jack Johnson. Even the Kirschenwasser, which he drank with great gusto, seemed to have something weird and uncanny about it.

Well, the three started forth to the Common, and went from one encampment

to another for an hour or two. Black Jack's presence was an immediate introduction: and the old crones instantly wanted to tell their fortunes, while the young ones looked wickedly at them, and endeavoured to fascinate even the venerable Métivier. It is a fact worth notice that, while gipsy women will do anything in the way of frolic fascination, their chastity is impregnable.

After wandering from point to point, and seeing several picturesque encampments, Jack Johnson announced his intention of taking them to see his great-grandmother, Ursula Johnson. She was Queen of the Camp, by reason of good blood and great age. Both were obvious at once. The old woman, very small, with very white hair and very bright eyes, welcomed her visitors with a charming mixture of dignity and courtesy. Though only Queen of the Gipsies,

she was quite a queen. She sat under the roof of her van—which was a remarkably good one—with as much pride and as fine a condescension to inferior persons as if she had been mistress of Windsor Castle. Nor would she allow her guests to leave her without entertainment. She gave them, in quaint old-fangled cut glasses of unusual size, a sparkling refreshing liquid which turned out to be heather wine.

"Mami," said Jack Johnson, "is the only one left who knows the secret of making that wine. She will leave it, when she dies, to little Ursula, my sister's daughter. But she won't die yet, though she is pretty old."

"How old is she?" asked Métivier, when they had come across the heath into the road, and were separating.

"She's a hundred and thirteen, sir," said Black Jack.

They had come back into the road within

a few yards of the Hut, so Métivier wished his friend good night. When he was gone, Adrian, who had occupied the interval in lighting a cigar, said to his gipsy companion,

"What's the good of bringing all these people on the Common, Johnson? They look very nice, but it doesn't pay, does it?"

"Well, my lord, it certainly does not. But we're not going to be deprived of our rights by this Squire Mowbray. Because he's got money he thinks he can do just as he pleases with everybody. The Marquis wouldn't have turned us off the Common if it had been his. He's a gentleman, he is."

"Glad you think so, Johnson," said Adrian, laughing. "We wanted to buy the property, but Mowbray was beforehand with us. And I should certainly have voted for allowing your people to come here when they liked. You are not exactly honest, you know——"

"We're about as honest as railway directors, my lord," says Black Jack, "or as those gentlemen that get into Parliament by bribery, and then take their solemn oath and davy that they didn't do it. If we weren't a little honester than them folks I'd cut the connexion at once, and turn methodist parson, that I would. Look here, my lord, we all know you—you're a gentleman: we've never touched a pheasant in your woods, and never will. And if you'd bought the place, you'd have let us come here as we used to come—I know that—and have sent us something to drink now and then. But this fellow that's got it is no gentleman—and he'll be sorry for the day when he first interfered with a Romany Chal."

"My good fellow," said Adrian, rather amused, "don't on any account quarrel with Mowbray. He's a Manchester man, and doesn't know what a Romany Chal means.

There's no particular harm in him; but he has lately come into the country and bought land, and thinks he can do exactly as he likes. He'll learn a little in time. You're a sensible fellow, Johnson, and you know that to quarrel with Squire Mowbray would be absurd. Try if you can't get on quietly, and not annoy him or interfere with him."

"I don't want to interfere with him, your lordship," said Black Jack, "but if he interferes with us he'll have to take the consequences. He's a Manchester man, is he? Well, they say we Romans came from Egypt first, and that's a sight ancienter than Manchester."

"By Jove!" thought Adrian, "the fellow talks like Sidonia. I should like to know where you *did* come from, Johnson," he said. "I don't believe there's anyone among you that knows."

"We know about as much as other

people," he replied. "It isn't everybody knows his grandfather, my lord. I wonder whether Squire Mowbray does? Now my grandfather's father is alive to this day."

"What!" says Adrian, astonished. "A great-grandfather as well as a great-grandmother! You're joking, my good fellow. It can't be true."

"We marry early, most of us," says Johnson. "And we live in the open air, and don't trouble ourselves about being respectable, and haven't any debts to worry us. So we manage to live pretty long."

"But your great-grandfather must be immensely old," said Lord Waynflete.

"Not so very. We're all only sons in our family. He married at about fifteen, and my grandfather and my father weren't much behind him. I don't believe he's more than ninety, your honour."

"I should like to see him."

"He'll be at Rothcastle Fair the day after to-morrow," said Black Jack. "He's got some business there. If your lordship will ride over, I'll show you the old man."

"How shall I find you?"

"The moment you are in the fair I shall know," quoth Black Jack.

"But, look here, Johnson," said Lord Waynflete, "you showed us your great-grandmother just now, and you said she was a hundred and thirteen. Are they husband and wife?"

"Not a bit of it, your lordship. She's not a Johnson born, she's a Cooper—and the Coopers think themselves a sight better than we are. Everybody's got four great-grandfathers, I've heard say, and four great-grandmothers."

"True enough, Johnson," said Lord Waynflete laughing. "I didn't think of that."

Promising to go to Rothcastle Fair, he wished the gipsy good-night, and went away. And the next day he arranged a party for Rothcastle, inducing the Marchioness to drive over with him in the mail-phaeton, and picking up Métivier on the way. Rothcastle, always a sight worth seeing in fair-time, would be unusually busy with this enormous addition of the gipsy forces.

"Take care of the Marchioness," said Lord Wraysbury, when he heard of the arrangement. "What horses shall you drive?"

"The old chestnuts," replied his son. "They're much too steady to be frightened by the crowd."

CHAPTER VII.

WHAT HAPPENED AT ROTHCASTLE FAIR.

IT was again a glorious October morning, when the mail-phaeton with the old chestnuts came up to the door of Ashridge Manor. The air was misty-bright, and threw a mystic glamour over the burning woods, the dewy lawns, the shining river. Lord Waynflete, having taken a sensible breakfast —a cold grouse and a bottle of Chambertin —was ready for any enterprise.

"Mayn't I go too, mamma?" exclaims little Lady Mary, in a tone of pathetic entreaty.

"No, dear," said Lady Wraysbury. "Stay

at home and take care of papa. He'd be lonely without you."

"Well done, Alice," laughed the Marquis. "That means I'm to be head-nurse on duty. Never mind, Mary, we'll amuse ourselves while they are away. I dare say we shall find the key of the jam-cupboard."

"Don't make yourselves ill, you two babies," said his wife. "I know of another cupboard, where pills and black draughts are kept. Come, Adrian, I am ready."

They drove down the hill, across the bridge, along the village street. Burly old Burton, standing outside his door, touched his hat profoundly. Lady Wraysbury had not passed through Ashridge since her arrival; she was rather astonished at Mr. Mowbray's new tavern, looking exactly as if it had been transplanted from a suburb of Manchester, before the smoke of that fulginous city had turned it the colour of ebony.

As they crossed the Common, the change in its appearance was curious. Not a creature now visible amid the gorse and heather —but at intervals you could see black scorched spots, where the Zingari had built their fires. The great camp was gone; there was perfect stillness, save when a leveret or a rabbit bounded across, or a lark not wholly tired of summer song rose into the air. When they reached the Hut, the Hermit was already leaning over the gate, in his usual contemplative humour. He saluted the Marchioness in the old-fashioned style of the *vieille roche;* there were Métiviers in France long before the Buonapartes.

The drive to Rothcastle from Ashridge is all the way pleasant: woodland and heath alternate, and now and then you catch remote glimpses of the winding Ashe, which however keeps shyly away from the road. The Marchioness had never seen the fair

before. She was amazed at the multitudinous vehicles of all sorts; the strings of horses, and herds of cattle, and flocks of sheep; the immense crowd of people, of many different types, ruddy farmers, pallid cockneys, swarthy gipsies; the universal noise and confusion and hubbub.

"I am glad Mary did not come," she said. "It would have frightened her."

"You are not frightened, I hope, mamma?" said Adrian. "We can turn back when you like, you know."

"O no. I want to see it all. I'm not in the least nervous."

They drove slowly through the village street, whose normal mud had been churned into chaotic slush by tread of hoofs innumerable and interminable grind of wheels. Adrian pulled up the old chestnuts in the space between the ancient church and the Market Place, left unfinished by hands that

have been dust for a couple of centuries—and waited to see what would happen.

Not long had he to wait. There came up to the carriage a little black-eyed short-skirted gipsy girl, of about ten years old, tambourine in hand, who said to Adrian—

"Old Jack's coming along, your honour."

And in about two minutes there came along the road, mounted on a stout cob pony, a short old man, with iron-grey hair. He did not look like a gipsy. He wore a drab coat, knee breeches, leathern gaiters, and might have been taken anywhere for a small farmer in good condition.

He rode up to the off-side of the phaeton, and said—

"You wanted to see me, my lord. My boy says you're a good gentleman to us Romans. I'm old Jack Johnson."

"You don't look very old, Mr. Johnson," says Lord Waynflete.

"I haven't had much trouble, my lord. I never married but once, and my wife died when my son was born."

"Gipsy philosophy, mamma," said Adrian.

"What a dreadful old wretch!" whispered the Marchioness.

"That's a good old pony of yours," said Lord Waynflete.

"He *is* a good un. He was foaled the very day Black Jack was born, so I swore I'd always keep him. That's thirty years ago, last Lammas, and I believe he's good for five years more, at least. I've rode him twenty miles to-day, your lordship, and shall ride him twenty more before night."

At this moment a tall gaunt gipsy ran up alongside of old Jack's pony, and said something to him in Romany. The old fellow abruptly rode away down the street, where it could be seen that a vast crowd of gipsies

were surging to and fro in a highly excited state. Métivier dismounted.

"There is something going on, Adrian," he said. "If you will stay here, I will walk down and see. I understand Romany pretty well."

Métivier returned in about ten minutes.

"Your neighbour, Mowbray," he said, "is determined not to be beaten. He has taken out a warrant against Black Jack Johnson for trespass on Ashridge Common, and the police have just got him in custody. They'd have been killed though, if it hadn't been for the old fellow we have just talked to. The gipsies were mad: old Jack rode his pony right in amongst them, and made his way through with blows from the handle of his riding-whip, and gave them quite an eloquent oration."

"What did he say?" asked the Marchioness.

"I heard only part of it, the noise was so great. He told Black Jack not to resist the law, but to go quietly with the constables. And he told the mob of gipsies to keep the peace, and to disperse quietly. 'I am his father and your master,' the old man said: 'trust in me, and leave these men to obey *their* masters. Good-by, Jack!' Black Jack waved his hand gaily, and went off between a couple of policemen, whom he could have killed if he had chosen. I had no idea there was so much discipline among the gipsies."

"Mowbray is not very wise, I think," said Adrian. "He might easily have kept the gipsies in order during the very short time they occupy the Common. They will play him some trick, in revenge for this, you may depend on it."

Just then old Jack Johnson rode up, quite in a good humoured state.

"The Squire's angry," he said. "My

poor boy is gone off to prison. They can't hang him, I know—and I don't think they'll keep him very long. He can't sleep well under any roof but the sky."

"I thought there was going to be a row," said Lord Waynflete.

"I'm glad I came to Fair," said the old gipsy. "If I hadn't been here, one or two of those fellows in blue would have lost what little brains they've got. But I'm sorry for Squire Mowbray."

"Why?" asked the Marchioness.

"Our people will have their revenge, my lady. When the police get hold of Black Jack, they feel just as you English would do if somebody insulted the Prince of Wales. I can keep them from violence, but I can't hinder secret revenge. But good-bye, my lady, and gentlemen both. I must go and see what they are doing. I *am* glad I came to Fair."

Wherewith the old fellow trotted off upon his pony.

"He is a curious character," said Métivier. "I must talk to that old man again."

Lord Waynflete turned his horses' heads towards home. As they drove through the fair it was easily perceivable that the gipsies were quieted down. They had returned peaceably to their customary avocations—the boys were turning somersaults, the girls were walking on stilts, the women were telling fortunes, the men were encouraging the manly and elegant pastime of "Twelve Throws a Penny," with cocoanuts and toys for prizes. The rough broad humour of the English fair was in full progress. It is always a vulgar sort of entertainment, with evil flavour of execrable beer and tobacco, and much looseness of discourse. You will get no better till you educate the people—and you will not educate the people until

you learn that they are of more value than the land, or the cities of luxury, towers of labour, mansions of comfort, built upon the land. If only our statesmen could be taught the one great political idea—namely, that God's noblest creation is an Englishman, and that if we develop the greatest possible number of perfect Englishmen, all other things will follow. People squabble over a Bishop of Exeter, who seems to tread on the verge of heresy: they do not stir a finger to rescue from poverty one street-boy, who will be a thief, but who might perchance be a Shakespeare—and therefore worth more than all the prelates and priests of all the churches. How can men dare to waste in this foolish fashion the imperishable blood which filled the veins of Shakespeare, Milton, Byron?

Meanwhile, what has happened to Black Jack? He met his great-grandfather's

humorous glance with a warning twinkle in it, and walked off between two small stout policemen with perfect docility, looking like a mastiff in custody of two sheep. He was taken to the lock-up. That important building consists at Rothcastle of three rooms: there is the prisoner's dungeon, square, and about ten feet each way, on the ground floor: built up against this are the sitting-room and bedroom of the constable in charge. The actual prisoner's cell is about twenty feet high; the walls are tremendously thick, and the windows are mere slits in the wall. The constable's rooms are built one over the other, each being about ten feet high. There are a great number of iron bars and spikes everywhere.

An amiable fellow was the constable in charge; and he liked Black Jack, as did most people who knew him. So his wife

gave the prisoner some tea, and the policeman kindly inquired if he had any baccy. He had plenty: he lay upon his mattress and smoked his short pipe; and his guardian, after a pleasant chat about the Fair, wished him good night, and locked him in, and went happily to bed.

Black Jack lay on his mattress, smoking, for several hours. He was a man of infinite patience. He listened to the roar of the crowd outside; thick as were the walls, he could hear the mighty murmur of the Fair. Not till some hours past midnight did he move, and then he struck a match, lighted an end of candle which he took from his pocket, and examined the walls. At one point there was an iron rod which supported something in the roof: it was imbedded in the stone work, but there were points at which the masonry had crum-

bled away from it. Black Jack saw his way at once. He could climb like a cat. He worked away quietly with an old clasp knife till there was something to grasp. Then, holding himself up by the left hand, he made a similar attack upon the wall a few feet higher up, and in less than half an hour he had reached the rafters, on one of which he sat astride, examining the roof. It was simple tile work, no ceiling. Jack removed a dozen tiles, and was out under the sky: no moon, but a bright starlit night. Below, Rothcastle was very quiet; here and there a smouldering fire burnt itself out, but the various vagabonds of the Fair were asleep.

Black Jack, in no wise anxious to break those long legs of his, searched carefully along the edge of the roof for something that projected. He found it at last—about three inches of timber. Very cautiously

he let himself down over the side, holding on to the beam like grim death ; then, when he hung straight by his hands at full length, he dropped. A man who knows how to drop may descend almost any reasonable distance—cats know the secret.

Odd to say, no sooner had Black Jack touched the ground than some one touched him on the shoulder. It was pitch-dark, and he pulled himself together, in readiness to polish off a policeman. He was agreeably surprised: a whispered word caused him to recognize his great-grandfather.

"I knew you'd do it, boy," said that venerable gipsy. "I knew you weren't such a fool as to stay in that place. Look, I've brought the stallion ; he's had a good feed of corn and will go fifty miles. Jump up, and off with you. *Down the road*, mind."

Black Jack wanted no further instructions. The old man stood listening to the

sound of the horse's hoofs, as he splashed along the miry Rothcastle street.

"One to you, Squire Mowbray," he said, as he turned away to his nocturnal repose. The old gentleman did not condescend to undress; he crawled through the door of his tent, lay down on an old great-coat, with a whisky jar for his pillow, and slept in five minutes the sleep of conscious innocence.

Meanwhile, Black Jack, on the brown stallion, was riding west like a whirlwind.

Next morning, what a row there was in Rothcastle! How the police swore! How the gipsies laughed! The Chief Constable had come up to look after this important prisoner. When he found that the bird was flown, his anger reduced him to shorter words than he commonly used. He was very vexed, this unfortunate Hughes, for he wanted to oblige a wealthy and influential

gentleman like Mowbray, and now he had missed a capital opportunity of doing so.

When the news reached Mr. Mowbray himself, he vented his anger on the inefficiency of the police. But he was a man prompt in action, so he immediately advertised far and wide a reward of one hundred pounds for Black Jack Johnson's recapture.

CHAPTER VIII.

IN WHICH ASHRIDGE COMMON IS ENCLOSED.

THE Marchioness of Wraysbury came of a family in which consumption was hereditary: the damp air and sudden changes of an English winter did her harm, and the doctors were unanimous in advising the Marquis to take her abroad. She disliked to go herself. She felt sure that no harm could come to her in the cosy rooms and warm corridors of Ashridge, or when she drove out on sunny days so comfortably wrapped up. The Marquis knew better. He knew that the air of England is poisonous in winter; that no warmth of stoves, no defence against draughts, no possible wrap-

pages, can keep that poison from operating. I am loyal to the English race, but I am not particularly loyal to England. This country is so called because we English came to live here, some thousand years ago: we have aired it, cultivated it, developed its resources, till it is comfortable enough. I don't think much more can be done with it. I think it is getting used up. If a few million English would just agree to migrate to some other island, in a better climate, bringing brains and books—bringing all the force of the world's first race—I don't think they'd regret it. England, as I have said, is getting used up: and there are so many stale old-fangled absurdities which would suddenly vanish if we English started a new England. I don't propose a colony: I propose an exodus. One great benefit would be this—we should leave the Scotch and Irish behind.

Lord Wraysbury decided to take his wife and daughter to Nice for the winter: Adrian very willingly agreed to remain at Ashridge and keep matters straight. He did not care for the voluptuous atmosphere of perpetual summer. Moreover, as we know, there was a little girl in this neighbourhood from whom he had no wish to be far removed; though he had not met her so often lately, nor had he quite made up his mind as to what he should do in the matter. He liked her; he thought he loved her; he did not feel quite certain. There was no humbug at all about Lord Waynflete. It never occurred to him that there would be anything absurd in his marrying a governess. But he was not quite so prompt as some men I have known, in making up his mind whether he loved a girl or not.

Let us cross the river and the village street, and take a glance at Edward Mow-

bray. He also was in an uncertain state, in his feelings towards Miss Gray. He saw she was just what he wanted, but he was held back by the knowledge that all Manchester would laugh at him if he married his governess. Another thing which hindered his love-making was his anger with the gipsies, increased to white heat by Black Jack Johnson's daring escape and complete disappearance. You would think that a hundred pounds' reward would bring in a notorious chief of the gipsies, seven feet high. It did not. Mr. Mowbray doubled it.

And then he determined to take stronger measures about Ashridge Common. His solicitors had, by his desire, looked carefully into the title-deeds of the estate, and were decidedly of opinion that Mr. Mowbray had a right to enclose the Common. It had been left open for many years; but it was

clearly the property of the lord of the manor.

Such was the judgment of Lincoln's Inn. Mowbray, a prompt and resolute man, determined to act on this opinion. He gave his orders to a Birmingham firm; got down a set of workmen; and in about ten days the wild heath, over which there had been free passage for man and beast for years immemorial, was surrounded by iron fencing, six feet high, deeply sunk in the ground, and with fearsome spikes at the top.

"This will settle your gipsies," said Mowbray, when he saw it accomplished.

Lord Waynflete happened to be absent when this great event occurred. He was at Brighton. Métivier watched the progress of the affair, leaning philosophically over his garden gate, and was amused. When the thing was finished, he sat down, and indited a letter to his friend:—

"My dear Adrian,

"The Mowbray improves. Will you guess what he has done?

"He has not married that little governess of his, though he much wants to.

"Would she have him? The heart of woman is deceitful above all things.

"What matters that to you and me, confirmed bachelors?

"'When will this fellow come to the point?' you exclaim. I come. Mowbray has surrounded the whole of Ashridge Common with an iron railing, unusually lofty and pointed.

"Alas for the gipsies! Alas for your canter over the turf with your pretty little sister!

"Shall such things be? Of course they shall. Manchester rules England.

"Still, thank the dwellers on Olympus, Manchester is foiled by the Romany race.

Mowbray offers two hundred pounds for the capture of our agreeable friend, Black Jack. Our agreeable friend is not captured, by any means.

"Mowbray, in his wrath, encloses the Common.

"These things are very amusing. Don't you think a Buonaparte and a paternal government would be of use in England—for a time, at least?

"GEORGE MÉTIVIER."

Lord Waynflete found Métivier's note at the Carlton, and was amused and amazed. He took the last train down that night, telegraphing for a groom to bring a horse to the station. Next morning he walked over to see his friend at the Hut. Of course he was stopped by Burton on the way.

"So the Common is fenced in, I hear," he said.

"Yes, my lord. The Squire says it's his. I suppose nobody daren't resist him, in these parts?"

"Well, my good fellow," replied Lord Waynflete, "if it *is* his, he has a right to do as he likes with it. That's the thing we have to discover. If he hasn't the right, he will soon have to remove his fence."

"I hope so, my lord," says Burton; somewhat sulkily, however, for he began to think Squire Mowbray could do anything he pleased.

Adrian reached Métivier's dwelling, having walked along a road between tall iron fences. It moved his spleen somewhat, but it moved his pity more. What a fool, he thought, must this Mowbray be, to vex himself and to anger his neighbours for such trivial reasons!

"You see, my friend," said Métivier, when they met—"you see what a churl this

is. Why, he would shut up sunshine and air from the trespass of those he deems his inferiors, if he could. You English develop the greatest genius and the greatest generosity of the world: but—forgive me, my dear friend—you also produce the greatest fools and scoundrels, and the most illiberal of men."

"Do you think he has a right to do this?" asked Adrian.

"How should I know? I am unfamiliar with English law. It looks to me like brutal robbery. But you know what to do, of course."

"What?"

"Ask your attorney. That's the regular English recipe."

"I'll follow it," said Adrian. "Good-bye, Métivier. I shall get back to London by the first train."

But he didn't. He loitered through Ash-

ridge rather, with Big Dog at his heels, and tried Burton's ale and Miss Avery's gossip, and thought he might possibly see the prettiest little girl in the world pass through the village on some errand or other.

No such luck.

No: although he sauntered along the street of the little village for a considerable time, he caught no glimpse of the charming figure that he knew so well. Wherefore, seeing that he was in disfavour with the destinies that rule such trivial matters as casual love-meetings, he went off to Ashridge Manor, and made arrangements for going to town by the evening express. And the next morning he was holding council with that trusty attorney and agent, Nicholas Chinery, of Gray's Inn.

Gray's Inn is, among Inns of Court, by no means the liveliest. I have in my time climbed a good many of those dingy decayed

staircases; for your barrister-author is apt to find shelter in those lofty retreats, and to sport his oak with persistency. But there are great firms of attorneys in Gray's Inn; and on a very dark ground floor, Mr. Chinery, inheritor of the agency to the Marquises of Wraysbury, has his offices. An ancient and venerable, honourable and sagacious man, carefully protected from the outer world by a cordon of clerks.

Very few clients saw Mr. Chinery: very few clients would he condescend to accept. If you have the business of a great country family, you may keep up your house in Russell Square, and drink old port after dinner, without troubling yourself to serve writs upon the hapless gentlemen who cannot and will not pay their debts. No ordinary business was transacted at Mr. Chinery's office. His managing clerk was a far more dignified personage than most of the lawyers

one meets, and might indeed have very well passed for a judge.

Lord Waynflete obtained access to Mr. Chinery with no difficulty, as may be supposed. He stated his case succinctly. The old lawyer listened, and said nothing.

"Has Mowbray this right, as lord of the Manor of Lindesay?" asked Adrian, having finished his explanation.

"I can't answer the question offhand, my lord. I have a strong impression that an attempt of this kind was made very many years ago, and that it failed. If so, I shall have full record of it somewhere."

"That would guide us, certainly," replied Adrian. "Can you put your hand on it?"

"It will take an hour or two's search. Are you engaged this evening, my lord? If not, and you will dine with me, I have no doubt I can then produce the document. I am quite alone."

"I'll come with pleasure," said Adrian. "Your old port is a temptation, Mr. Chinery."

Which it really was. The old lawyer was a good judge of wine, and did not spare expense in stocking his cellars; and when he got an illustrious guest like the heir to the House of Wraysbury, you may be sure that he brought from the innermost bins the choicest vintages.

Mr. Chinery lives in a vast house in Russel Square, all by himself. It is the great sorrow and disappointment of his life, that he has no son to succeed to a business which has descended from father to son through many generations. His wife died after a few years of marriage, leaving him with one daughter only. When that young lady reached maturity, he fixed upon a promising young solicitor as just the very husband for her—the very man to be his part-

ner and successor : but Miss Chinery differed from her papa, and insisted on marrying an eloquent Curate, who is now a Dean, and will be a Bishop if he lives long enough. The worthy lawyer forgave his daughter, and hoped that in time a grandson would arrive to play the important part of " Chinery, of Gray's Inn :" but Mrs. Dean, though as prolific as becomes a clergyman's wife, has none but daughters. The old gentleman wishes women could be attorneys-at-law. The girls come in small parties of two or three to see their grandfather now and then, exchanging their spacious Gothic home in Idlechester Close, covered with ancient flowering creepers, and with vast expanse of lawns and gardens behind, for the square comfortable ugliness of a house on the Bedford Estate. Eight of them there are, and none yet married ; and if either of them should marry a solicitor, Mr. Chinery

feels it is now too late to mould him into a representative and successor.

Lord Waynflete got an excellent heavy dinner, suitable to the massive furniture and plate, and general air of respectable ugliness, of comfort without luxury, of wealth without taste, which pervaded Mr. Chinery's house, which seems indeed to pervade the vicinity. With the dessert came the precious document, a quaint old black-letter affair on vellum, which Adrian examined, but found that he could scarcely make anything of it.

"I will have it copied," said Chinery. "To-day there was not time. The date, you see, is 1722. That was the year when David Lindesay bought the Manor, which has since been called by his name; previously it was called Under Ashridge. He proposed to enclose the Common, and indeed began to do it. The people about pulled

down his fences as fast as he set them up. Then Gerald, Marquis of Wraysbury—he was the eleventh Marquis—took the matter in hand, and it was legally proved that the lords of Ashridge Manor had rights of turbary and the like over all waste places in the Manor of Under Ashridge. Indeed it would seem that originally the present Manor of Lindesay had been the manorial inferior of the lords of Ashridge."

"Then there can be no doubt," said Adrian, "that my father has rights over that Common."

"Not the slightest doubt, my lord. We should be quite certain to carry a suit against Mowbray, with such a precedent."

Old Chinery's eyes twinkled at the thought of a law-suit.

"Get that record copied," said Adrian, "and send it down to me. But we won't go to law with him."

"What *will* you do, my lord?" asked the lawyer.

"Leave him to go to law with us, if he likes. I shall remove his fences."

Chinery seemed inclined to advise a more deliberate mode of procedure, but Lord Waynflete was resolute.

"No," he said. "Do you get that document copied, and obtain corroborative evidence if there is any, and be prepared for a fight. And now I must leave you, Mr. Chinery: I shall try to see a man to-night who can help us in this matter."

Lord Waynflete drove straight to Victoria Street, Westminster, and there was lucky enough to find, busy with rule and compass, the very man he wanted—a young engineer called Wakefield, with whom he had become acquainted abroad, and who was now engaged upon one of the vast public works which have lately changed the

aspect of London. The engineer was surprised to see him, but entered eagerly into his project, which was to give a good night's work to a couple of hundred "navvies" in removing Mowbray's fences. Wakefield could command the men, having twice the number at work. It was arranged that they should go down in a special train at about midnight on the next day but one.

"Can they do it quickly and quietly, Wakefield?" asked Adrian.

"O dear yes. I'll pick my best men, and tell them what tools to take. They'll enjoy the fun. They'll have a holiday, and be paid for it. You ought to pile the fences up in front of Mowbray's windows."

"It would be impossible, without waggons, and there is no time for such an arrangement. No, we must leave them on the Common. You'll manage about the special train, Wakefield. I want to go down to

Brighton to-night, and there's just time for the last train from Victoria."

"I'll see you off, my lord," said the engineer, and they started at once, and caught the train by a minute.

"Mind, I leave everything to you, Wakefield. I shall be on the platform at twelve precisely."

The appointment was kept. Dim burnt the lamps at the great terminus, for the last ordinary train had left some time, and it was assumed that, from station-superintendent down to newsboy, everybody was gone home to bed. But this assumption, like many others that men make, was wholly wrong. On the dim platform stood a dark mass of men, each of whom carried over his shoulder some heavy implement: they made no sound, for the word had been passed to keep quiet till they were well out of London. Presently a well-lighted train

of six or seven carriages and a horse-box backed into the station. Under Wakefield's direction the men took their places at once. He and Lord Waynflete then entered a first-class carriage, and prepared to smoke.

"The way's clear," said the superintendent. "You won't stop, and you'll be set down close to the Common."

For the railway ran within a few yards of Ashridge Common, so there was no need to stop at the station. Only the men on their return would have to go to the station, as the train must get on the upline, and be shunted on a siding, for fear of accidents.

When the "special" was well away from London, Lord Waynflete could hear his regiment of navvies roaring forth mighty melodies. For them this midnight ride was a gigantic spree. Be sure that they had all provided themselves with supper and beer, vast hunches of bread and meat and stone

jars of "cooper," being the favourite form of refreshment. They ate and drank and sang till the train pulled up—then they shouldered their weapons, and marched on to the Common, and worked in gangs with that terrific energy which belongs to the English navvy.

It chanced to be a bright moonlight night, a point which Adrian got in his favour without any consideration on his part. As he stood on the breezy heath, and saw these stalwart fellows, working in their gangs of twelve, each with a foreman, he was astonished at the rapidity with which the heavy iron fences were removed, and neatly piled. Wakefield also had astonished him by an act of generalship. He had brought a stout pony, saddled and bridled, down in that horse-box; when they arrived, he mounted and rode round the Common, and saw that all the gangs were doing their duty.

"Rather a good idea of mine, this pony," he said, when he rejoined Lord Waynflete.

"You ought to be a general," quoth Adrian. "I should never have hit upon that. I noticed your horsebox, and fancied you had tools in it."

The engineer started for another round, and when he returned reported that every fence was removed, that they were all neatly stacked, and that the men were on the way to the station. It was getting towards morning.

"Many thanks, my dear fellow," said Adrian. "Thank your men for me. They have done the thing well, and deserve thanks as well as payment. You must come down and see me, and hear the end of this little affair."

"I'll come on a Sunday," said Wakefield. "It is my only holiday just now."

Wakefield got his men off by the train in

excellent time. Lord Waynflete walked across the Common home, and let himself into a door which led to his own special suite of rooms. When he rang his bell next morning it was no surprise to his valet, for Adrian belonged to that sensible class of men who always do as they please, careless of inferior opinion. Would that they were more numerous.

Verily there was a great disturbance, a singular excitement in Ashridge that next morning. The news was brought in with the milk to the Mowbray hotel. Mr. Flanagan, who generally lay in bed late, unless there was some hunting or coursing, tumbled out in a tremendous hurry, and made his way to the Common. Yes, it was true. Every fence was up, and they were neatly piled at regular intervals. All done in a single night! The whole village of Ashridge turned out: the rustic population stood

staring at the Common as if they expected the fences to get up and replace themselves. No greater amazement could have been exhibited by the inhabitants of that city wherein the palace of Aladdin was built in one night.

Mr. Flanagan of the Mowbray Hotel, an Irishman, and therefore superstitious, at once exclaimed—

"It's all them darned gipsies."

For he attributed to gipsies magical powers, and this seemed like a work of magic.

Then the practical side of his mind began to operate, and he said to himself—

"I must go and tell the Squire."

Off he went toward Mowbray Mansion at his briskest pace. The morning was mild and sunny. Mr. Mowbray had opened the window of his breakfast parlour, and sauntered out upon the terrace. At the other end of it he saw approaching his little

daughter and her governess, who had been taking the fresh air for a few minutes. Ethel Evelyn, dressed in red, was trotting along by Amy's side, and looking up pleasantly into her face, and talking about the young robins that came up to the windows, and asking her which was a thrush or which a starling, or something of the sort. Amy had won her victory over her recalcitrant pupil, and seemed to have quite transformed her.

As Mowbray saw them at the other end of the terrace, he thought with pleasure of the change in his little daughter, and he looked with delight at the beautiful creature whom chance (potent divinity!) had sent him as a governess. For Amy, you see, had a perfect figure; and she had exquisite movements and gestures; she would turn her head, or lift her hand, or raise her dress from the ground, in a way that was unique.

These little things seem trivial; they fascinate men, because the body is an index to the mind. Grace of gesture means grace of soul.

Mowbray was looking with admiration at Amy, when a servant came to say that Mr. Flanagan wanted to see him on important business.

"Confound that Irish blockhead!" said the Squire to himself. "Important business this hour of the morning! If he wants more money he won't get it. He's the most improvident of Irishmen."

The Squire went round to the servants' entry, and there found Flanagan declaiming excitedly, amidst a crowd of domestics, from the groom of the chambers down to the foolish fat scullion. They stood *arrectis auribus*, while the Irishman, with the fine fluency of his race, narrated all that he knew—and indeed a good deal more. So

absorbed were the group that they did not observe their master's approach until he was close upon them, when they dispersed with singular promptitude.

"Now, Flanagan," he said, "what's the meaning of this? I object to being disturbed at this time."

"Very sorry, Squire, but I know you'll say I did right. Those revengeful gipsies have pulled down every fence upon the Common!"

"What!" thundered Mowbray. "Pulled down my fences! The gipsies, you say! You are dreaming or drunk, my good fellow."

"Not a drop have I tasted to-day, your honour, the Holy Virgin knows it. There's the fences all piled in heaps, and who could have done it but the gipsies?"

Mowbray ordered his horse, sent word to Miss Gray to breakfast without him, and rode straight to the Common. He could

hardly believe his eyes. There were the fences, piled as neatly as possible at regular distances. He galloped right across the Common, and found the same thing everywhere. He was taken entirely by surprise.

"No gipsies did this," he reflected. "It is the work of skilled workmen, and a good many of them. Gipsies only travel in their carts, or on horseback. The people who did this must have come by rail."

No human being did he perceive on the Common or near it, except Lord Waynflete and Métivier, standing at the gate of the Hut. Adrian had turned out early to see his friend, before going back to Brighton to finish his visit. Métivier, always an early riser, was probably the first person who saw what had been done.

"You see," said Adrian, "I have asked my attorney, and that's the result. Now there will be a little legal fighting."

"Does Mowbray know you are the aggressor?"

"Not yet. He will have a letter from our lawyer to-morrow morning."

"I wonder," thought Mowbray, as he rode to the railway-station, "whether those two had anything to do with it? I don't like that young fellow."

At the railway he got some information. Mr. Green, the most obliging of station-masters, had been purposely kept in ignorance of what was to be done. He was merely told that a special from London would run through at a certain hour, and, returning empty, would wait to take up passengers. Wakefield had arranged everything, so that the London authorities knew nothing about Lord Waynflete in the affair; and, in the dusk of the midnight platform, he was recognised only by the chief guard, who shut him in, and unreluctantly accepted

a sovereign, and kept his counsel. Green told Mr. Mowbray all he knew, which was that the train had kept its appointment; that when he had seen it safe in a siding, he had left it in charge of the guards and gone to bed; and that when he returned to superintend the early morning traffic, it had left for London. He saw no passengers—only the guards and engine-men.

Mowbray had some friends coming from Manchester that day; they had promised to be at the Mansion to dinner. He calculated that by taking the next train he might get to London and back just in time for them. On this idea he acted with his usual promptitude.

Arrived at London, he went to the manager's office, and made his statement, and inquired what that gentleman knew of it.

"Only this," was the reply. "A special was ordered for twelve last night by an

eminent engineer to run through Ashridge Road Station, and return, and wait. We named our price, and he drew a cheque at once. Not a word was said about the purpose of the expedition; he merely said that one first-class carriage for himself would be enough, as the men were navvies, who would have their tools with them. I gave the orders, and the train was back here by daybreak."

"Do you generally let special trains in this way, without asking questions?"

"There are some questions to which a cheque is the best answer. Besides, the train was hired by a well-known engineer, and rapid bits of engineering are often done at night."

"I suppose the amount paid was a heavy one?"

"It was moderate, being for one of the profession—only two hundred."

"You did not see the train off, I suppose?"

"Why, no," replied the general manager, "that's not much in my line. Besides, I had some people to dinner."

Mowbray was reminded of his own engagement.

"I must get back soon. This eminent engineer—may I know his name and address?"

"By all means, Mr. Mowbray. There's no mystery about it."

Obtaining this information, Mr. Mowbray got into a hansom, telling the cabman to drive as fast as possible to Victoria Street.

Wakefield was out.

Back he came to the terminus, and reached it just as his train was moving from the platform.

"Well," he thought, with a Sardian grin, "this completes it. There'll be Sir Jacob and his son, with nobody to receive them, and

that helpless Priscilla tearing her hair and wondering what to do. Never mind, there's the telegraph."

So he telegraphed to Miss Cust not to keep his friends waiting for their dinner; and, having forgotten all day his own refreshment, sat disconsolately down to the ordinary terminus meal, flavourless soup, an over-roasted joint, sherry full of fire. Of course the next train was a very slow one, to make the chapter of accidents perfect.

However, when he got home at about eleven, and found the billiard-room brilliantly alight, and Sir Jacob and his son smoking cigars, and knocking the balls about, he began to feel a little happier. Mowbray, you see, was unaccustomed to ill-luck, and generally had the ball at his foot.

"I hope you dined well, Sir Jacob?" he said, after their first greeting.

"Admirably," replied the old gentleman.

"Dinner and wine perfect. I pitied you, my dear fellow."

"Ah," said Jacob the younger, who was a noble specimen of the Manchester swell, a rather peculiar species, "and that pretty governess of yours, Mowbray—she is delightful, really!"

The Squire could have knocked him down. He made no reply, but called for some Champagne and brandy, which refreshed him.

CHAPTER IX.

THE BOHEMIAN BARRISTER ON DUTY.

ON the following morning Mr. Mowbray found the mystery solved. Lord Waynflete had arranged with Chinery that a formal letter should be sent to him on the day after the rails were removed: so, amid his numerous letters he found one which claimed, on the part of the Marquis of Wraysbury, rights over Ashridge Common, in the Manor of Under Ashridge, incorrectly called Lindesay: that in the exercise of such rights the Marquis, by his representative, had caused the removal of certain iron fencing illegally erected around the Common, and

that Mr. Mowbray was requested to take away the piles of fencing within a reasonable time.

The Squire, who was first in the breakfast-room, was in a tremendous rage.

"That audacious young lord!" he exclaimed in soliloquy. "I guessed it was he. What the deuce does this lawyer mean by the Marquis having rights over the Common? If there are such rights, and that fellow Terrell hasn't found them out, I'll get rid of him pretty soon."

He meditated whether at once to employ his lawyer, or first to communicate with Terrell. He decided on the latter, and caused a telegram for him to come down to be at once despatched.

While thus gravely deliberating, Miss Cust and Ethel and her governess had entered the room, but he was too absorbed to notice them. However, presently came the burly

pompous Sir Jacob, with his creaking step, and his

"Ha, good morning, ladies. Good morning, Mowbray."

Close after this important patriarch of merchandise came the young Manchester exquisite, who looked at Mowbray's grave face, and said,

"My dear fellow, you are quite seedy. Did you travel too much yesterday, or have you had bad news this morning? How are the markets?"

Mowbray winced. He had his reasons of business for keeping on good terms with this father and son; but he privately thought the latter the most atrocious young cub in the City of Cotton. The young cub had quite another opinion of himself. He was his father's only son and partner; he dressed in a style which he flattered himself would be admired in Pall Mall; he lavishly

spent his money on all the fashionable dissipations of the day. Sir Jacob had a great admiration for his son, who for his part was on the most familiar terms with his father.

"Mowbray's had bad news this morning, governor, you may bet on that." Thus elegantly did he address his father on the first opportunity. "Think he's been speculating? You could see that the post had spoilt his appetite."

It hadn't exactly done that: but Mowbray could not help thinking of what he should do about the Common, and was rather absent, and forgot his breakfast. Jacob the younger compensated. He ate of everything on the table; finished with a great silver tankard of ale; talked to everybody, and especially to Miss Gray, who had never been taught slang, and understood less than half of what he said; pretended to make love to Ethel Evelyn, and tried to kiss her,

when a spice of her old temper showed itself, and she pulled his sandy whiskers with such violence that it brought tears into his eyes, and nearly made him swear. Amy scolded Ethel afterwards, but I don't think she was seriously displeased.

They were to shoot that morning: Jacob the younger had brought down a new breech-loader of the most improved description, and looked as if he meant to kill every head of game in the county. Sir Jacob, rather too obese for such amusement, preferred a solitary stroll.

Mowbray's shooting was the least satisfactory part of his new estate. The coverts had been neglected under the late owner; and you can't stock a manor with game as easily as you can build a house. Moreover, Mowbray had no knowledge of the subject: so he advertised for a head keeper, and got a man of magnificent appearance, and with

the most magniloquent testimonials. But this fellow really knew very little more about game than his master: and the keepers over at Ashridge soon found him out, and laughed at him heartily.

"I fear I shall show you very little sport," said Mowbray to his friend, as they walked across the woods, followed by the magnificent keeper and his attendant, and two brace of dogs. "I haven't been here long enough to preserve. I mean to have a fine head of game next year, and rather think of forming a deer park."

"Fine place up on the hill there," quoth Jacob, who had never been down before. "Who's is that?"

"Ashridge—Lord Wraysbury's."

"O, yes, an awful old Tory. Do you know him? Is he a good neighbour?"

"I don't know him at all," said Mowbray.

"Ah, that's a pity. We might have tried his woods, if you'd been friends. I suppose he's got lots of birds."

At that moment a hare ran across. Jacob saw her, fired with both barrels, and missed with both.

"Confound that gun!" he exclaimed. "It's a new one, that I haven't tried yet. I believe I should have done better with my old one."

There is nothing very amusing in following two inferior shots over ground where there is very little game. Mowbray made no pretence to be a sportsman, but he certainly did more execution than the young man from Manchester, who had come prepared to do wonders. He, however, did not seem discouraged; but blamed the new breech-loader, and the scarcity of birds, and returned to a late luncheon in a state of apparent self-satisfaction.

"Too late for trout-fishing," he said, as they came where there was a fine view of the windings of the Ashe. "Else I might have had better luck with the fly. There's trout in that stream, I suppose, Mowbray?"

"The river is in Lord Wraysbury's Manor," replied the merchant, "so I know nothing about it."

"Deuced unlucky. Wraysbury seems to have the best of everything down here."

Mowbray, who loved to dazzle his mercantile friends with the magnificence of his house and the perfection of its appointments, did not enjoy remarks of this character. However, it was no use to be annoyed. This young man of Manchester was famed among his friends for making unpleasant remarks. The victim didn't like it; but as it amused the audience, he was rather popular than otherwise.

Late that evening came Terrell, the

Bohemian barrister; too late for dinner, which Mowbray, with all his hospitality, did not regret. For Terrell was an excitable man; wont when on a railway journey, which he hated, to console himself with copious draughts of stimulating liquid; garrulous and humorous under such circumstances, but hardly presentable at a table presided over by decorous Miss Cust, and where Amy Gray sat in shy prettiness, in the modest soft-coloured high dresses which Miss Pinnock had taught her were becoming a governess. Little Amy had never seen a dinner party: the first time a fashionable lady in evening dress becomes visible to her, I wonder what she will think?

The Bohemian barrister came joyously into the billiard room, a pleasant sight to him after his long dark railway travel. Mowbray introduced him to his friends, and then said:

"You're too late for dinner, Terrell, and I don't suppose you'll care to go into the dining-room. Have something here, will you?"

"Exactly what I should like."

"Well, what will you have? I know you are a good judge of such matters."

"I should like a broiled pheasant, and a bottle of mulled port. After that I shall feel better."

He was supplied with what he wanted with promptitude. Mowbray's people were always rapid in their movements when their master was at home. Terrell sat down at a small table close to a grand fire of logs built upon andirons, and ate his bird and drank his wine with infinite satisfaction; and having finished, came to look at the billiards.

Mowbray and Jacob the younger were playing; the former a steady and the latter a showy player, but neither of anything like

the first force. Terrell watched them through a game or two, wherein Jacob the younger was for the most part victorious, and then proposed to engage the winner of the next. This also fell to the young man of Manchester.

"You're not altogether a bad player, sir," says Terrell, "but you'd never get your living at half-a-crown the game."

"Ah, you think you can beat me," he retorted.

"I think it might be done. Come, I'll give you twenty out of fifty for a sovereign."

The young man from Manchester was disgusted. He had never seen Roberts play, whereas Terrell was a pupil of that magician of the cue. He laughed at the audacity of the challenge, but accepted it.

"I hope you've got plenty of sovereigns, Mr. Terrell," he said.

"I shall soon have one of yours," retorts the Bohemian with a laugh.

Terrell began with a miss. His opponent scored seven, making him twenty seven. Terrell scored five, making four to the good. Then the Manchester man had a great innings, and scored seventeen, making him forty-four.

"This looks awkward," said Terrell, chalking his cue, and then taking a great gulp of brandy and seltzer.

His opponent laughed.

"You can't gobble me up quite so easy as you think," he said. "Now, Mr. Terrell."

Terrell settled down to his work, and made a break of forty-six with the utmost ease, eagerly watched by the others.

"Why, you're a grand player, sir," said Sir Jacob.

"Passable," replied the barrister, modestly. "I once beat Roberts, when he gave

me eight hundred out of a thousand."

"Terrell can do anything," says Mowbray to Jacob junior. "You should see him shoot."

"Can't do much where there's no game," was the retort.

"Well," said the old knight, "I must go to bed, Mowbray. What say you?"

"I must also. We need not hurry you, gentlemen. You'll be ready for business to-morrow morning, Terrell?"

"Rather," he said.

The merchant and his elder guest retired, and Terrell and his late opponent remained to talk and smoke and drink. Terrell would never go to bed if he could help it. Weary waiters in the smoking-room of his club, the latest in London, would anathematize him hour after hour, as he consumed goblet after goblet, cigar after cigar, till daylight broke in the east, and Covent Gar-

den awoke to its matutine business. Could he only get a comrade, he would go on for ever. This evening, finding himself so cosily placed on a sofa in Mowbray's magnificent billiard-room, with a grand fire blazing, and an unlimited supply of alcohol and tobacco, Terrell was happy. Besides, he had Mr. Jacob there—Jacob Jones, for I have not as yet mentioned the illustrious family name —and Terrell saw through him at once, and resolved to amuse himself by enlightening him.

Jacob Jones did not appear at breakfast the next morning.

Terrell did, looking as fresh as a lark, and doing credit to Bohemia by his appetite, and to himself by his courtesy to the ladies at table. There was never a more perfect gentleman when he had himself well in hand. But, as I have said, he was excitable, and would under certain circumstances

become rather too garrulous—rather too high in his tone.

Breakfast over, Mowbray excused himself to his other guests on the plea of important business, and took Terrell to his private room. There he gave him a succinct account of what had occurred, and showed him Chinery's letter.

Terrell pondered.

"Chinery of Gray's Inn," he said. "I know him. He is one of the dryest and sharpest old fellows in London. He may know something we don't know about the title. You see, the record of these old manors that have been in one family from time immemorial, are often full of information that nobody can get at."

"But why," asked Mowbray, "did you recommend a property which might possibly be in such a position?"

"You can never be sure of any property

in the world. I have seldom seen a clearer title than old Lindesay's representative gave you. If there is any such right as Lord Wraysbury claims, I'll answer for it they didn't know it."

"That's no great consolation to me," says Mowbray.

"What sort of a fellow is this young Lord Waynflete—I mean as to temper? Is he impetuous, do you know?"

"I know very little about him. I should think him determined, and perhaps rather quarrelsome. Why do you ask?"

"Because I should like to know whether that letter was old Chinery's own idea, or was what Lord Waynflete told him to write. And I should also like to know whether Chinery advised him to remove your railings. However, I can find out all we want to know."

"You can?"

"Unquestionably. I'll go back to town this afternoon, and you shall know within the week."

"Meanwhile, how do you advise me to act?" asked Mowbray.

"Leave the rails where they are, and send a copy of Chinery's letter to Roberts and Roberts, asking their advice. You must employ them in the business by-and-by, so they may as well be allowed to suppose that you consulted them from the commencement."

Roberts and Roberts were Mowbray's Manchester attorneys.

"A very good idea," said Mowbray with a laugh. "You always think of those things, Terrell."

"I'd have been Lord Chancellor, sir, if I had been able to keep straight. The Lord Chief Justice and I were at Oxford together, and have been up at a police-court together,

and have been in a spunging-house together. Never mind. They'll make me a revising barrister by-and-by, or a judge in one of the West Indian Islands. What train can I get to town by?"

"Don't go to-day," quoth Mowbray, hospitably. "To-morrow will be time enough. You can have a little shooting—besides, you got no dinner yesterday."

"I've neither a gun nor a dress-coat," said Terrell, with a laugh.

"Well, I'll find you a gun, and the ladies will permit you to dine in velvet. You took the conceit out of young Mr. Jones at billiards yesterday; and I should like him to see you shoot. He fancies himself a good shot, and has brought the newest thing in breech-loaders. What do you say?"

"I accept, of course, though it's neglect of duty."

The conference over, they descended to-

gether. Sir Jacob had settled down in the library, amid letters and newspapers. His son was smoking on the terrace. Mowbray proposed an hour or two's shooting. Jacob the younger did not seem to care about it much, but assented; and they started presently in an opposite direction to that of yesterday's exploit.

There was more game this way. Mr. Jones made several splendid misses, and execrated his gun.

"I don't know where that gent's shots *do* go," murmured an under keeper. "Just now they was meant for a pheasant, and next they was bound to hit master's head; but neither weren't hurt."

"Change with me for a time," says Terrell. "The one I've got shoots pretty straight."

It certainly did, in his hands. But Jones's, a splendid implement of the newest

and most careful construction, was very superior; and Terrell had the luck to knock over a brace of pheasants within five minutes.

"You'll have plenty of game here, Mowbray," he said, "if you get a sensible keeper. That long swell behind is merely a fool. What's that bit of marsh below? Is it yours?"

"Yes."

"A likely place for a snipe, it strikes me. Let's try."

Terrell was right; he bagged three brace right away.

"I don't call this bad sport," he said. "And I don't call this a bad gun of your friend's—he may make me a present of it if he likes."

They had a pleasanter dinner that evening than any since the Joneses had been in the house; for Jacob junior was stricken with admiration by Terrell's higher accomplish-

ments and wider knowledge, and did not attempt to say so many nasty things. And the Bohemian barrister, being in the presence of ladies, showed his better side, and produced quaint legal reminiscences of witty judges and brilliant counsel. He knew everybody of his own standing, and they all admitted his equality; he might, as he said, have been Lord Chancellor; but the gaieties of life had for him a greater charm than its duties. Men of this sort are a failure in the world, but they are uncommonly pleasant companions at the dinner-table and elsewhere. Terrell's sparkling talk fascinated Amy Gray, revealing the existence of an unknown world. She had never heard such brilliant sketches of character, such lively anecdotes, such witty epigrams. Her eyes grew bright and her cheeks flushed rosily as the *raconteur* grew more and more fluent after each glass of Rœderer or Marcobrunner.

When the gentlemen went off to their billiards after coffee, and Amy to her quiet bedroom, she could not help wondering what sort of a place the world was. She had passed her childhood in a dull and sordid school of charity; she was suddenly transplanted to what seemed in comparison a fairy palace, a temple of delights; she had found a hero in the person of Lord Waynflete, the very day of her escape from prison; and now she heard of a new and strange region of the world, where intellect and wit seemed to be the lords paramount. And the people she saw were so different. Mr. Mowbray and the two Joneses all came from Manchester; but how far superior he was to them! Mr. Terrell came from London, and seemed in some things superior to all three. Were all London people better than Manchester people, she wondered? And then she said her prayers, fell asleep, and

dreamt she was Lord Chancellor and had to sentence Jacob Jones junior to death.

Meanwhile, the billiard-room was cosy as usual, and Sir Jacob was taking a lesson from Terrell.

"A quick eye, a steady hand, a little intuitive dynamics—those are the requisites for billiards," said Terrell. "But the great thing is, to make your play easy. Don't go in for showy play; try to have your balls in an easy position every time. Once learn that art, and a break of two hundred is as easy as a break of twenty."

They went to bed early that night. Terrell, who was the hero of the hour, announced his intention of starting by the first up-train, which left Ashridge Road at the dismally early hour of six. So the Joneses retired first, leaving Mowbray and Terrell together.

"I've written a small cheque for you,

Terrell," said the Squire, handing him a parallelogram of paper folded up. It wasn't a very small cheque, I'll do Mowbray the justice to remark. "But why do you want to go so early? Why not stay to breakfast?"

"Shall I tell you? I don't want to see Miss Gray again. She reminds me of somebody else that I knew twenty years ago. She wasn't a bit like Miss Gray, but there was the very same innocent happy look in her eyes. So I'd rather not meet Miss Gray again: it makes me melancholy."

"Well," thought Mowbray, "the notion of Terrell's being sentimental!"

But he thought a good deal of Amy Gray that night himself.

The following evening was spent by the Bohemian barrister in a place very different from the brilliant apartments of Mowbray Mansion. It was, however, rather a cosy place in its way. An ancient coffee-room,

divided into boxes in the snug old fashion; a long room, in which two famous fires were burning, on one of which stood a huge copper kettle, with a tap, holding about a kilderkin; a sanded floor, and no very brilliant dinner apparatus, but capital viands and liquors.

Hither came Terrell, in prosecution of Mr. Mowbray's business. He had a fine wide legal acquaintance—and it was deep as well as wide, extending from the highest stratum to the lowest. There was hardly a judge on the bench who was not his friend, or at least his acquaintance; while a very large number of pettifoggers' clerks had served him with writs in his time. Between these two extremes his knowledge was also extensive, at each successive level: and among those whom he knew was the dignified Mr. Rooker, managing clerk to Chinery of Gray's Inn.

Not, however, Chinery's confidential clerk. The old boy was too shrewd to give his confidence to anybody. He was as silent as Horus, otherwise Harpocrates. He had the custody of several family skeletons, and never opened their cupboard except when alone, or left the keys in anybody's way. Hence it was very little indeed that Rooker knew of his master's business.

Terrell, who knew his habits, caught him by accident taking his midday chop, with the *Morning Post* at his elbow. Rooker always read that journal; he had a firm belief that he ought to have been a gentleman and a man of fashion, and loved its glimpses of the upper world. The landlord of his chop-house took in that elegant journal chiefly to oblige Mr. Rooker—"as was a werry reglar customer, you see." Rooker took what he called his luncheon—a mutton chop, half a pint of porter, and a glass of "rack," regu-

larly every week-day at that chop-house, except when he got his fortnight's holiday in the autumn. He always took his holiday in the shooting season, and those of his friends who loved him would inquire on his return how he had enjoyed the sport, and whether the birds were wild. He has been known to give a little game to his intimate friends. Once on his return he brought a brace of pheasants for Chinery. The old lawyer smiled significantly, and said,

"Very fine birds. Come and eat 'em with me on Tuesday. But don't waste your money, Rooker—don't waste your money."

"Ah, Mr. Rooker," said the Bohemian, taking a place at the same table, "glad to see you well. No news to-day, is there?"

"None at all. There are two or three judges very ill. Pity you haven't a friend in the Cabinet, Mr. Terrell."

"Faith, I'm a very good judge already—

of port wine. Waiter, bring me a kidney and some stout."

"I don't often see you here, Mr. Terrell," says Rooker.

"Not often. I drop in for some lunch just where I happen to find myself. By the way, is there a place in this neighbourhood where one can get a good dinner? You're sure to know. I sometimes have to be down here on business just when luckier fellows are going to dine at their clubs, and I should like to know where to get a civilized meal. Where do *you* go, Rooker?"

"I generally go to the Lord Eldon Coffee-House: it's an old-fashioned place, but you are capitally served."

Terrell knew the Lord Eldon well enough, and felt certain that Rooker did not often dine at a place where the rumpsteaks were excellent, but cost five shillings.

"I'll try it, certainly," he said. "What

do you say? Shall we dine together there? I've nothing to do to-night. But perhaps you've an engagement."

No: Rooker had no engagement, and was quite ready for a good dinner at the Lord Eldon. So he agreed to meet his entertainer there at seven o'clock, and went off to his office.

"Now," thinks Terrell, "if this blockhead knows anything, out it shall come—as certain as if it were one of his eyeteeth, and I had the pincers upon it."

He went to the Lord Eldon, and ordered dinner for two.

"The best bill of fare you can give me, Frederick," he said to the head-waiter. "And the choicest wines. Game, of course. I don't want the bother of ordering: I leave it to you."

"You may depend upon me," said the waiter.

"By the way, I owe you something; what is it?"

"Very little, Mr. Terrell."

"No matter; I'll pay it at once, and have it off my mind. You'll wait upon us, I suppose."

"Yes, sir."

"Then remember, I'm a stranger here. You've never seen me before. Be as affable as you like to the gentleman I bring with me."

The appointed time came; Rooker, in full evening dress, looking a Q.C. at least, was there five minutes before it. There was a dingy mirror over the fireplace, and he examined himself in it with much satisfaction, though a warp in the glass made him look as if he had taken poison, and were expiring in frightful convulsions. Then he took to studying the evening paper until Terrell's arrival.

The dinner was as good as the Lord Eldon

could produce. The wines were abundant, and well-chosen.

"I gave them *carte blanche*, you see, Rooker," said the Bohemian; "told them I wanted a good dinner, and that I wouldn't be troubled with ordering it."

"You see, I told you it was a good place to dine," says Rooker, quite elate.

Of course there was some fine old port after dinner; all lawyers like port wine, and Terrell was particularly fond of it.

"Had your usual trip into the country, Rooker?" he asked, by-and-by.

"O yes. Returned ten days ago."

"Good sport, I hope."

"Very fair: not so good as last year."

"By the way, I had a day's shooting last week. Was lucky enough to kill some snipe."

"What part of the country?" asked Rooker.

"Ashridge, not far from Rothcastle. Lord Wraysbury has a place there."

"Ah yes, he's a client of ours," says Rooker. "He's a nobleman of the right sort."

Need I say that Mr. Rooker was a High Tory—a very fervent supporter of the Church and the Crown?

"His son, Lord Waynflete, is a fine young fellow," says Terrell, just as if he were his intimate friend. "By the way, there's a new-comer down there, some man from Manchester, who has been squabbling with him about manorial rights. These millionaires are buying estates everywhere now."

"Oh, I know all about that," said Rooker, with a laugh. "That millionaire won't do much good. We found an old document in our office, date 1722, which shows that the owner of Under Ashridge, now called Lindesay, made the attempt to enclose the Com-

mon at that time, and the Court decided that Lord Wraysbury had superior rights."

"By Jove!" quoth Terrell, "is that a fact?"

"Yes. It's a crabbed document, looking twice as old as it really is. We had to have it copied, and the whole story is as clear as possible."

"Well," thought Terrell, "this old fellow has given me bad news in exchange for a good dinner. Mowbray will be in a sweet temper when he hears this story. It's true, I can see: and that accounts for Waynflete's acting so boldly. Well, my good friend can't always have his own way: he isn't often beaten, and perhaps it may do him good."

And then he said to Rooker:

"That will rather astonish the opposite party. Come, suppose we finish with a bowl of punch and a cigar."

The punch was an excellent finish, and indeed it finished Mr. Chinery's chief clerk. He had rather an undignified and dishevelled appearance when the punch was running low in the great china bowl, and its solid ingredients, such as sticks of cinnamon and slices of lemon, lay like stranded wrecks in a receding tide.

"Get the old boy a cab, Frederick," says Terrell. "I've had almost enough of him. You must give me a bed to-night. It's too cold to go out of doors with a good dinner and several bottles of wine concealed about one's person."

The Lord Eldon, though not an hotel, has a comfortable bedroom or two for privileged customers, who have sanitary objections to cold air after dinner.

"Have a fire lighted," said Terrell, when Rooker was disposed of, "and send me up some writing materials and a gentlemanly

supply of brandy and soda. I've a short letter to write, which you must send to a pillar-box to-night. Don't let any human being come near me in the morning till I ring."

Such were the Bohemian barrister's arrangements.

CHAPTER X.

MARIGOLD.

EDWARD MOWBRAY was angry when he found himself foiled. But he was too sagacious a man to fight a losing battle. So, after some reflexion, he ordered the iron fencing to be removed from Ashridge Common, and took no other notice of Mr. Chinery's letter. He felt sure there would be some way in which he might annoy his aristocratic neighbour. He was less certain about the gipsies: however, Rothcastle Fair would not return till next year, and meanwhile he had much to do. He had to stock his preserves, improve his gardens and hot-

houses, make a deer-park. He was not certain whether he would not try to do something more important than any of these. Amy Gray was always in his thoughts—and he would long ago have put the question to her but for a question which haunted him—

What will Manchester say?

Meanwhile, what did Ashridge say?

"My lord's beat the Squire."

"Yes, and darned glad I am! What business has he got taking in a Common that always used to belong to everybody in the village? It's a darned shame!"

But Mr. Flanagan and the other gentlemen who haunted the Mowbray Hotel, talking horse, and playing billiards, and drinking Irish whiskey, were unanimously of opinion that the Squire would get the best of it.

"His honour won't be beat," Flanagan would say, "by any of your lords, or any of your gipsies."

However, the stacks of iron fencing had been quietly removed, and there was no further attempt made to claim unusual rights over the Common.

All through the winter, which was a severe one, Ashridge Manor was extremely quiet. The Marquis being abroad with his wife and daughter, Lord Waynflete divided his time between various country houses. Once or twice he paid the old place a flying visit, just to see how affairs were going—possibly not without an *arrière pensée* of a certain pretty little governess. But for the most part he was absent, shooting, hunting, flirting; enjoying the winter season as only an English gentleman can enjoy it.

Winter in England has been much abused, and deservedly. It is an abominable season for the great majority. It slackens work. It starves the poor and kills the weak. But there is one entity to whom it

is the most enjoyable of seasons—and that is the Englishman in the prime of life, in perfect health, and with unlimited command of money. He wins joy from the wickedness of winter. He builds houses of such massiveness and comfort, and carpets and curtains his rooms so snugly, that he defies the bitter storm without, and makes it heighten his enjoyment. He loads his tables with all the mighty meats—the turtle and venison, fish and game—which can only be eaten with real appetite when the weather is cold. He lays down ample store of choicest wine, and quickens the blood in his veins by the rarest vintages of the Coast of Gold. The world is iced that he may enjoy it by making an inner climate of his own.

There are slushy splashy raw comfortless mornings in our English winter—mornings when it seems equally horrible within and without. Will it rain? Sure to drizzle all

day—and if you get far from home it will come down like the Deluge. The coals wont burn; draughts come in through all the windows and doors. On such mornings the footman fiendishly brings you a request for "the amount of our little account." On such mornings servants lie in bed, and you get a comfortless breakfast. On such mornings you envy South Sea Islanders and dormice—any creatures beyond the reach of the infernal weather.

How is it with our friend described above? "Fine hunting morning, my lord," says John, as he brings in his water. He is out of bed on the instant; plunges into his cold bath; comes down to breakfast in pink, ready for action. Breakfast punctual and first-rate: *his* servants don't lie in bed. A rump steak and a small cup of tea; no ale or wine or brandy: then he mounts his hack, and is off to the covert-side. What

does he know of the weather he rides through? Rain may drench him; he's none the worse. He rides a three-parts thoroughbred, and leads the field, and goes fast at everything. Coming home through the mirky twilight, he has his warm bath, and dresses and descends to dinner, as fresh as paint, quite ready for a plate of "clear" and a glass of "dry"—with the proper sequences; quite ready to end the evening amid flirtation, music, proverbs, charades—with a game of billiards at the close of all. Without an unstrung nerve in his frame, without any of those mysterious aches and twitches which haunt the system of an unsound man, without the slightest care as to how many sovereigns he spends between morn and eve, this fortunate fellow contrives to get immense enjoyment out of a winter day.

Adrian, Lord Waynflete, though no enthusiast in field-sports, enjoyed them in

moderation; and, having perfect health and plenty of money, liked winter very well indeed. One thing certainly is in its favour —the pretty girls who work so hard all through the London season, and look so jaded at the end of it, are once more fresh and natural, having returned to their native nests, and to reasonable hours. They get some beauty-sleep now, and are not obliged to have their tea in bed at two in the afternoon. They are merry maidens, not belles of the season; nice girls, not mere marketable articles. Besides, they have their younger sisters around them—the pretty children who must not be allowed to quite escape from the school-room till their elders have fulfilled their duty. Now these younger folk, though supposed to be in the pinafore stage of existence, and to dine when others lunch, and to learn geography and Italian, are sometimes rather older than they are

allowed to look, and can occasionally flirt with as much skill and science as their sisters who have graduated in the saloons of western London.

Lord Waynflete went on his winter circuit, through some of the pleasantest houses in England, staying a week here and a fortnight there, and taking life easily enough. He would rather have been at home, but Ashridge was just now deserted. He liked to look after his own place; to visit the horses and dogs, the woods and fields; he knew that he was missed by everybody at Ashridge, and by Big Dog especially. However, there was no pleasure in staying alone at the Manor, so he accepted the invitations of his friends, and had a wandering winter.

Let us look in upon him at Mere Court, in Gloucestershire, so called because of the great lake in the grounds, a noted haunt of wild fowl. Mere Court lies low, and the

country around it is flat and damp, the nearest village having the suggestive name of Bratton-in-the-Marsh. But the Delameres have dwelt there for generations, and seem to thrive; they burn big fires in the old house, and scare the demon of damp from the doors. Hither came Adrian, to join a pleasant party—Hugh, the eldest son, having been his friend at Oxford. A pleasant circle; some very pretty girls; among them one who specially took his notice. She has thus been painted by a poet of my acquaintance:—

"Ay, in sweet sport I named her Marigold:
The golden haze of the Calendula
Always around her seemed to glide and play;
And the great bulk of her bright hair was rolled
Back from her deerlike head in curious twine
Of gorgeous burnisht gold, splendidly serpentine.

"And all her fresh flusht face was smitten thro'
With fervent colour, such as sunlight burns
Into delicious depths of blossom-urns:
But then her eyes were of strange sapphire-blue,
Or that which men have seen in early skies
Ere Phosphor in the abyss of perfect purple dies."

The description is pretty accurate. She was a marvellous woman, of two or three and twenty—a creature all glowing flushing colour, who looked as if you would find the same colour if you cleft her in twain—just as it is with a melon.

She was a Miss Delamere; but Adrian did not at first understand that she was not a sister of his friend Hugh. There was such a fine family of brothers and sisters that it took a new-comer some time to learn their names and peculiarities. The golden-haired blonde—a *positive* blonde, as Dr. Holmes very well puts it—was very different from the rest of the feminine group. They were also fair, but it was *negative* fairness; they had no definite colour; the majority of men would have preferred them to their candescent cousin, and styled them "sweetly pretty girls." She wasn't that sort of thing at all; she was a meteor in petticoats, rather.

Her name was Agnes Delamere; but somebody [the above-quoted poet says it was he] nicknamed her Marigold; and this of course got shortened to Mary, and then altered to Polly. And Hugh's brother Charlie, the wit of the family, had transmuted Marigold into Yellow Flower, and called her The Flower at ordinary times, and the "Yaller Gal" when he wanted to make her angry—a thing not difficult to do. Consequently Lord Waynflete was rather mystified for some time, and could not make out what was her actual name.

Hugh Delamere would have been very glad if she had been his sister; for it was his destiny to marry her. She was the sole daughter and heiress of a younger brother of his father, who had made an immense fortune: and, as the Squire had a big family, the brothers had amicably arranged that Agnes should marry Hugh, whereby the old

estate might be kept free from the heavy burdens which otherwise must be charged upon it for the benefit of the younger children. Both the cousins were aware of the arrangement. Hugh was obedient: he was a fine honest young Englishman, not too brilliant, anxious to do his duty. He saw what a good thing this would be for the family. Still, he slightly hesitated. He couldn't understand his cousin. She was a different sort of being from his sisters: he'd have fallen in love with a girl like one of them with perfect willingness. But Marigold puzzled him.

Marigold herself had a mixed feeling towards her cousin. Naturally, she would have liked him better if she had not been obliged to marry him; this would be the way with any girl, and is excusable, if not justifiable. She could not help liking him for his good-humour and admiring his courage

and steadiness, but she at the same time felt a certain amount of contempt for his intellectual sluggishness. He was made of that sound sterling stuff which produces the ordinary country squire. He had a clear head for business, and excellent judgment on all subjects likely to come before him: but he didn't see much in Shakespeare or Tupper, and had never in his life said a clever thing —or tried to.

Marigold was an accomplished flirt, but had had few opportunities. Her father was rather a martinet, and kept her in good order when he was at home, which was seldom. The chief seat of his business was St. Petersburg, and he passed much of his time there: in that city he was a man of importance, having taken great government contracts, and being acquainted with the Imperial family. He had a palace on the Neva, as well as a warehouse, and was a Knight

of the White Eagle. Emperors are fond of men who can lend a million on an emergency. So Ralph Delamere kept his daughter at school, notwithstanding her mature age, at an establishment of the most expensive kind, somewhere near Kensington, where never more than six young ladies were received. The heiress was permitted to visit her uncle at Mere Court during vacation time, but all the rest of the year she was immured within the walls of Milton House, and her manners and morals were carefully watched over by the stiff and shrewd preceptress, a spinster of fifty, whom her pupils nicknamed Lady Macbeth. Marigold did not at all like this sort of thing, at her age and with her ideas, as may well be supposed; but her father was resolute, and she had no way of escape. She was not to be finally liberated from the care of Lady Macbeth until the necessary

arrangements were concluded for her marriage with her cousin. About these there seemed no particular hurry; her father didn't know when he could leave Russia, and of course desired to be present at his daughter's nuptials, determined to make them in all ways magnificent. The young lady was less satisfied than ever with her confinement at Milton House; for the girls of about her own age had lately dropped off, one by one, and their places were supplied by little chits of from twelve to fifteen, with whom she could not deign to associate, and who mischievously laughed at her for being kept so long at school. For some time she had frequent and enthusiastic letters from her old schoolfellows—letters which sorely tried her temper by describing the gaieties of the outer world, and the charming young men to be met there. Suddenly the correspondence would stop

altogether; then, after an interval, would come a brace of wedding-cards, and perhaps a stout letter in a soiled envelope, soiled by the delicious marks of bride-cake.

Marigold was delighted with Lord Waynflete, and went in at once for a tremendous flirtation. Adrian couldn't make her out. For a considerable time he took her for a sister of his friend Hugh, and rather wondered that so steady a fellow should have so fast a sister. Indeed, it was from her own lips that he learnt the truth, and under these circumstances.

Outside Mere Court there was a stone terrace, a pleasant promenade. One evening, after Adrian had been there for a day or two, the bright moonlight shone through a lofty window, whose curtains were undrawn. Adrian had by this time got on pretty good terms with Marigold; she amused and interested him; she had a fresh

original way of talking and thinking, which he liked; so they had at intervals many conversations on such topics as young men and maidens like to discuss together. Hugh wasn't at all jealous; perhaps he wished he could understand his future wife as well as Adrian seemed to. Hugh was willing to do his duty, but it appeared hard that he should have to marry a Sphinx.

Well, on this moonlit evening, when the Squire was asleep after dinner, and Mrs. Delamere knitting, and Hugh playing chess with Charlie, and some of the younger folk at a round game, Marigold espied the full moon through the tall window, and said to Adrian—

"Let us go out on the terrace for five minutes, Lord Waynflete. It is so dreadfully hot here. They will be wanting to play whist presently."

"Wrap yourself up carefully," said Adrian.

Well, they strolled out and walked up and down for some time in silence. The gay laughter of the girls at their game rang through the windows. Lord Waynflete, looking at his companion, thought there was something weird and mysterious in that golden hair and glowing face, seen beneath the moonlight, which seemed to brighten the brilliant eyes.

> "I guess, 'twas frightful there to see
> A lady so richly clad as she—
> Beautiful exceedingly."

That triplet came into his mind as they walked side by side in silence, under the moon. At that very moment

> "Her fair large eyes 'gan glitter bright,"

as she turned them on Lord Waynflete, and she suddenly said,

"What are you thinking of?"

"I was thinking of *Christabel*," he answered. "Do you like that poem?"

"I do, indeed. It seems to me to contain more real poetry than anything written lately. I mean that I can *see* Christabel, and the strange lady, and the old castle: they seem real people and a real place: but the people in Byron always make me think of actors and actresses. But I never meet with anybody who cares about poetry."

"Well," said Adrian, laughing, "your brother Hugh doesn't care much about it, I know."

"My *brother* Hugh!" she exclaimed, almost hysterically. "Why, you didn't fancy Hugh was my brother?"

"Excuse me, Miss Delamere," Adrian began—but she interrupted him, and with strange volubility, told him who she was, what was her relation to Hugh, how she was kept so many months in the year close prisoner under Lady Macbeth's charge.

"It is cruel," she said, "cruel, and I won't

endure it much longer. I am not a baby; I am of age, and my own mistress. Is it right to treat me so, Lord Waynflete?"

Adrian was rather perplexed, but made the most sagacious remark he could think of.

"You should talk to Hugh about it. He has a right to advise you, you know."

"Hugh! I hate Hugh! He shall never have any rights over me of any sort. I would rather drown myself."

"Don't talk so rashly," said Lord Waynflete. "Hugh Delamere is one of the best fellows in the world, and you will be very happy as his wife, and mistress of this charming place."

"Never! He only wants my money. You can see that he doesn't care for me. Haven't you seen that?"

"Why, don't you know, I thought you were his sister. You are excited to-night, Miss Delamere; you are not very well, I

fancy. Come, let us go in. It is too cold for you to stay out here any longer."

The thought flashed across his mind whether the young lady might not be a little deranged. It was the very full of the moon, and that is said to influence lunatics. He would talk to Hugh about it.

His theory was rather confirmed by her conduct. She hurried forward to the glass-door by which they had come out upon the terrace—opened it—turned suddenly round and clutched his arm, and said in a loud whisper—"Adrian, I love *you!*" and then ran away along the corridor.

Lord Waynflete entered just in time to join the whist-party. Marigold was seen no more that night.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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